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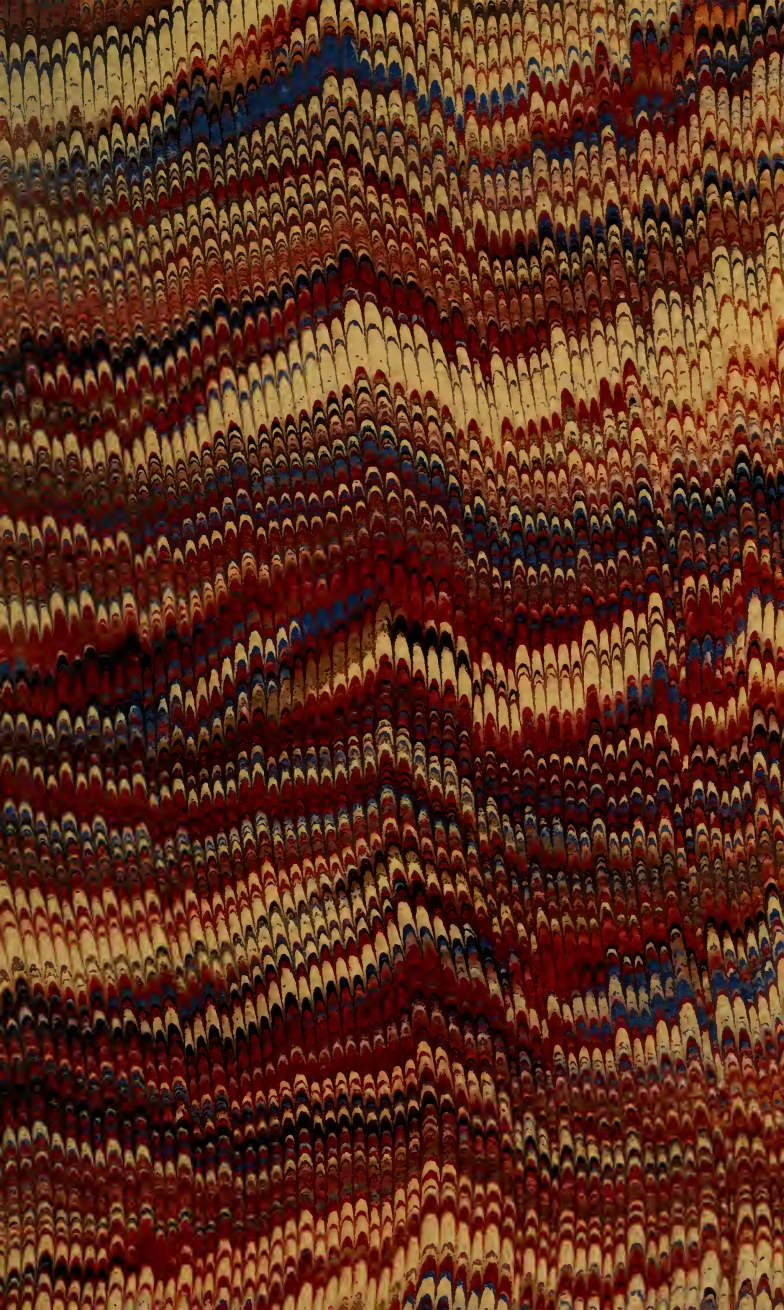


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CYRILLA.

A TALE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE INITIALS."

"Many also have perished, have erred, and sinned, for women."

ESDRAS, iv, 27.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CYRILLA.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are few human beings to whom the immediate and complete realization of their most ardent wishes would bring unalloyed satisfaction. Many may at first feel disposed to doubt this—none would have done so more unreservedly than Zorndorff, the evening of the eventful ball at his own house. A few, a very few days had passed over, and the scarcely concealed desire of his heart had been fulfilled. Margaret lay stretched on her bed—a corpse—and he was sole possessor of all her wealth! Was he satisfied, contented, happy? He did not appear so. There was a terrible earnestness in his manner, as he sat beside the dead, his eyes wandering from the rigid outline of the lifeless form, to the marble-like features which he examined, as if their perfect symmetry had never struck him until then. Occasionally he bent for-

ward, gazed long and anxiously into the but half-closed eyes, and then with a sort of shudder applied a handkerchief to the parted lips, from which some drops of blood occasionally trickled.

* * * * *

The sudden death of the Countess Zorndorff caused an unusual sensation in the town of Exfort. Even those whose knowledge of her was limited to having seen her languidly reclining in one of her luxurious carriages as she passed them in the streets, or to having stared at her from some obscure corner of the theatre, now eagerly discussed her domestic sorrows, real or supposed—indulged freely in conjectures as to the immediate cause of her death—related circumstantially all they had ever heard of her or her family, and endeavoured to increase the mystery which had pervaded everything concerning her by all the means in their power. With a large proportion of the population of the town, the porter at the President's house rose to an unprecedented degree of importance when it became known that Vica and her niece were relations of his, that he would probably marry the latter, and was perhaps already in possession of all the secrets of the Zorndorff family! He, however, considering his situation of a partly official description, thought it incumbent on him to

maintain a dignified silence on this occasion, and paced his room as nearly as possible in the same manner as his master did his study, sternly unob-servant of all attempts at colloquy, and giving precisely the same answer to every servant who came with compliments, cards, or condolences, "Her excellency the *Frau Presidentin* was tolerably well, but too much fatigued to receive any one."

Rupert heard this message being loudly and pompously delivered as he passed—it told him where he was likely to find his cousins, and he walked directly, and without being announced, to Melanie's boudoir. She made a motion of silence to him as he entered, and pointed to Cyrilla, who lay asleep on a sofa—her cheeks flushed, her eyelids swelled, and a pink streak along her eyebrows, showing but too plainly that the handkerchief which she held in the hands clasped under her head had been placed there to receive tears, of which weariness alone had caused the cessation.

Rupert noiselessly disencumbered himself of his sabre; and then drawing a chair close to Melanie, he looked towards Cyrilla, and asked in a whisper if that was the effect the Countess Zorndorff's death had had on her?

"She is perfectly inconsolable," answered Melanie in the same manner.

"I suppose," he said, after a pause, "I suppose

she fears that Zorndorff will now insist on the fulfilment of her promises to him?"

Melanie nodded her head two or three times, and then said: "One cannot blame him for doing so."

"Will she consent?" he asked with forced composure.

"I am afraid not."

"Afraid?"

"Why, yes; she must either fulfil her engagement to him, or—or—in short she cannot marry any one else without his consent, and of that there is not the slightest chance now."

"Melanie," said Rupert, after another and longer pause, "if you have in any way used your influence in persuading Cyrilla to make an agreement of so very questionable a description, you have betrayed the confidence placed in you by my aunt when she committed her to your care, and blighted for ever the happiness of those whose interest ought to have been nearest to you. Heaven only knows where the mischief will end!"

"Rupert," cried Melanie, quickly, "remember you have promised not to interfere....."

"Unfortunately, I have made a promise to that effect; when I did so, it was under the impression that Cyrilla would confide in me without reserve at the end of a few months, and that I should be

able to prove her promises and fears alike chimerical."

Tears stood in Melanie's upturned eyes as she exclaimed: "O, could I have foreseen the total extinction of a first love, so replete with the freshest feelings of youth, so exuberant on both sides with all that enchains the imagination, and....."

"Pshaw!" cried Rupert impatiently. "On Cyrilla's side there may have been a good deal of natural admiration for a remarkably handsome man; but it was you and your incessant encomiums of Zorndorff that made her fancy she loved him."

"Really, Rupert," said Melanie, with some irritation, "you seem to forget that Edouard is quite as capable of inspiring affection as yourself, perhaps even more so, if reports may be trusted."

"I have not forgotten his celebrity in that way," rejoined Rupert; "but I am convinced that, educated as Cyrilla has been, more than common means were used to induce her to make a promise which even his marriage with another woman could not annul. However, she has seen her error, has ceased altogether to care for him, and I am now resolved that she shall not be persuaded by you, or forced by him, into a marriage against her inclinations."

Rupert unconsciously raised his voice as he pronounced these words. Cyrilla moved, looked up, and extended her hand to him

"I am afraid I have disturbed you," he said, with unfeigned annoyance.

"No, for I only intended to sleep until you came. Yesterday, I heard you were on guard, and did not expect to see you; but to-day I knew you would come here."

"Then," said Rupert, with an appearance of cheerfulness he was far from feeling, "perhaps you also know my intention of proposing your removal to Freilands, either this evening or to-morrow morning?"

"Nothing I should like so much," she cried, starting up eagerly; "let us go."

"I have not slept for several nights," said Melanie, "and am too tired to leave home."

"I fear you are offended with me for what I said just now?" observed Rupert, penitently.

"No; though hearing the truth is sometimes painful enough."

"I ought to have waited until you had recovered from your recent fatigue," he continued. "You have been at the Zorndorffs' I know since the night of the ball, and by all accounts must have suffered there from more causes than want of rest. People say, *she* was not merely delirious but perfectly mad for several hours; that she called Zorndorff a murderer; said he had killed her child, and would not allow him to approach her."

Cyrilla walked to the window, while Melanie

answered: "I cannot imagine how you or any one could have heard that—but it is quite true."

"Is it also true that she said she was not his wife, and insisted on being carried out of his house?" asked Rupert, with some curiosity.

Melanie blushed, while answering with some hesitation. "Y—es, she said that also."

"But," continued Rupert, "the last part of her story is most probably an invention. Determined that the marvellous should predominate even at her deathbed, it is said that her madness was dispelled altogether, and instantly, by merely looking at a ring which Zorndorff held towards her—a seal-ring in no way remarkable, but which she examined with an attention incomprehensible to those around her, and after he had said a few words in a low voice, she sent every one out of the room, and from that time scarcely spoke to or looked at any one but him."

"The ring," said Melanie, "was one she had given him when they were betrothed, and which she had supposed lost or given away by him. Wiser people than Margaret attach importance to things of that kind."

"I know they do," said Rupert, "and no one more than Zorndorff himself. His wife was ever a sort of mysterious being, and naturally inclined towards everything mystical—in that respect she suited him perfectly."

“In that, but in nothing else!” ejaculated Melanie.

“I suppose,” observed Rupert, “the ring led to some satisfactory explanations?”

“Most probably, for though the subject of their long conversation is unknown to me, I heard Edouard making vows that he can now never fulfil, but which served to render her last moments happier, as she said repeatedly, than any part of her previous life.”

“It is better for her that she died,” said Rupert, thoughtfully; “for Zorndorff was most probably merely yielding to one of those fits of remorse to which, like all men of susceptible feelings and strong passions, he is so subject!”

“I believe it was something better than that,” said Melanie; “for I am convinced he would have given his life to save hers at the last; and she was quite conscious of it too. His grief afterwards was frantic, and now he will not believe that she is really dead; says that he has seen her in the same state before, that it is only asphyxia, or a trance; and he will not allow the slightest preparation for a funeral to be made. Is it not dreadful?”

“I think his doubts very natural,” said Rupert, “especially since I heard that an exclamation of his brought her back to life after she was supposed to have expired.”

“That is not so uncommon a thing as you seem

to imagine," rejoined Melanie. "I am, however, inclined to think that Margaret's spirit was at the time past recall, and that his voice merely brought back the still hovering soul, perhaps at the very moment of separation from the body. A question or two might have enabled me to ascertain the truth of my conjectures, but Edouard would not allow me to approach or speak to her. For the first time in my life, I saw distinctly what may be called the shadow of death—it was as if a gray cloud had passed between her face and the sun, while all around was bright with life and light!"

"And you thought of all that while the unhappy woman was in the agonies of death!" exclaimed Rupert.

"I—I could not help it—I constantly think of such things....."

"And imagine you understand them—but you do not, Melanie—such knowledge is too wonderful for you or any one, and will never be attained. Much as I like you, my dear cousin, I sincerely hope that your speculative eye may be far distant from my bed of death. Let us not further discuss a subject so painful as this luckless woman's last moments. I only wanted to ascertain that Zorn-dorff's grief was genuine—if it be so, Cyrilla, there is hope for us still—do you not think so?" he asked, going to the window where she was standing absently gazing at the fountain in the court.

"No," she answered, in a subdued tone; "I may not hope, and dare not deceive you."

"We shall have time enough to talk of our hopes and fears a few days hence at Freilands," suggested Rupert, looking down compassionately on her relaxed features and glistening eyelashes.

"Speak now," said Cyrilla; "I know you dislike tears; mine are exhausted for the present, and nothing you may say can make me more wretched than I am, or," she murmured to herself, "than I deserve to be."

"Dearest love," cried Rupert, drawing her towards him, "you altogether mistake me—I merely intended to say, that I feared the death of the Countess Zorndorff would greatly increase our difficulties; but I still hope—may I not hope, Cyrilla?"

She shook her head mournfully.

He bent down, and whispered, "You will not marry him?"

Uttering a stifled sob, she covered her face with her hands.

"Cyrilla," he continued gently, "I have waited more than three months for some explanation of this mysterious connexion. Not alone, as your legitimate protector, but as a man who considers himself affianced to you, I demand it now. Let it be without reserve for both our sakes."

"Oh, Melanie, what can I say to him?" she

cried, turning quickly round ; but her sister, perhaps fearing an appeal of the kind, had left the room.

“ Tell me the true nature of this promise,” said Rupert, “ or rather this engagement, for such it must be, and of no common kind either. When, where, how did it take place ? Who was present ? Have you signed any papers ? ”

“ I have done everything that was weak and foolish,” she answered, despairingly, “ and have only the alternative of being his wife, or.....remaining as I am.”

“ Then he cannot annoy you by openly claiming.....”

“ No,” she said, interrupting him, “ that trial at least is spared me.”

“ You speak so enigmatically, Cyrilla, that I am confirmed in my first supposition of there being some misunderstanding on your part—some misrepresentation on his.”

“ O no,” she replied, sorrowfully, “ there is not, cannot be anything of the kind, I assure you.”

“ I don’t think I can endure this state of uncertainty much longer,” said Rupert, a little impatiently. “ Cyrilla, you *must* allow me to interfere now ! ”

“ Not for the universe ! ” she exclaimed, vehemently. “ Death would be preferable to the conse-

quences of your interference! Remember your promise, and oh! Rupert, if you ever loved me....”

“If I ever loved you!” he repeated, reproachfully.

“I tell you I do love you dearly, devotedly—not like Zorndorff; for I believe.....if I were certain of being able to secure your happiness by resigning you.....I—would—do—so.”

“Then you can, you can,” cried Cyrilla. “Resign and—forgive me.”

“And *that* will make you happy?”

“As nearly so as I can ever hope to be.”

“I did not expect to be taken at my word when I made the offer,” said Rupert, with quivering lips; “but I will not retract. You are free.”

“And you forgive me, and will love me still?”

“I.....forgive.....you.....” he began, in so constrained a voice, that, supposing him angry, she clasped her hands, and exclaimed passionately: “Indeed, indeed, I did not intend to deceive you. I had hopes, just hopes until now. Oh, Rupert, you are the only real friend left me in the world.....I cannot.....dare not tell you this hateful secret.....but trust me and love me still—if you can.”

“Never for a moment doubt my affection,” he replied warmly, “or suppose that a want of trust in you made me wish to know your secret. Let us not speak of it again, and I shall endeavour to for-

get that we have ever had even a conditional engagement."

"And," said Cyrilla, anxiously, "you will be still the same to me.....but without any engagement or thought of the future? I know your regard is so unselfish that it can bear any test."

"You are trying it severely," said Rupert.

"I regret that it is so," she rejoined, in a low voice; "but you will continue unchanged to me nevertheless—won't you?"

"Tyrant!" he said, forcing a smile. "And how unconscious of your tyranny! Still, there must be some limits put to it, Cyrilla; for, even supposing that I continue to love on without a hope of any kind, you must at least define how much personal freedom you are disposed to grant me."

"I do not understand....."

"I wish to know exactly how much I am engaged to you."

"Not at all," said Cyrilla, turning away her head. "I never considered you bound to me in any way."

"But I did," said Rupert; "and being so, supposed that I had no right to leave the army, travel, or make any serious change in my mode of life, without consulting you."

"Dear Rupert, you know I have long wished that you should leave the army; and as to any change you may propose, I am sure....."

“Halt!” cried Rupert, smiling, “you are unconsciously talking as if we were actually betrothed! Suppose now I were to say—Cyrilla, you have marred my plans of future happiness and usefulness; but to live on in endless hopelessness without any fixed purpose of any kind is too much against my nature to be endured, so, when I have left the army, and the President can no longer be induced to remain at Freilands.....*I must travel.*”

Cyrilla felt and looked perplexed.

“You do not object? In fact, what could I do better?”

“A great many things,” she answered, eagerly. “You have your marsh to drain, and your village to build—a work of years, as you have told me yourself.”

“But not one that I can accomplish alone; so I have engaged a civil engineer to oversee the works, and have little doubt of being able to induce my former tutor, the Vicar of Windhorst, to undertake the management of the colony during my absence.”

“And have you already forgotten the infant school and children’s hospital we have talked so much about?” said Cyrilla, reproachfully.

“Those plans must be given up for the present. Without a woman’s advice and assistance.....”

“But,” cried Cyrilla, quickly, “I am quite as ready as ever to advise and assist you.”

“And for how long?” asked Rupert. “Can I

forget that three months hence, instead of remaining here with me, as I had hoped, you will probably go to Aix-la-Chapelle with the President? Have I not already heard of a journey to Milan, and a visit to Fernanda?"

"But you could go with us. Melanie would be delighted, I am sure."

"Very possibly; but Fernanda might not be equally so, therefore Italy is out of the question. When you are at Milan, I may perhaps go to..... Jerusalem."

"And why there?"

"In order to see something new. The Holy Land and Egypt are fashionable countries just now, and have become the usual resort of gentlemen in my situation."

"What *do* you mean?"

"I mean that disappointed men travel in the East, get a fever at Smyrna, are reported dead, and return home cured of their hopeless passions!"

Cyrilla turned away from him, observing almost indignantly, "Melanie was right—you cannot be serious—love is a mere pastime to you!"

"It has proved rather a dismal one lately," he answered.

"Our present painful position," she continued, "is, to say the least, an ill chosen subject for jesting."

"Very," said Rupert; "I wish you would sup-

pose me quite serious, and give me leave to travel for three or four years."

Cyrilla was silent.

"You consent?"

"Not if you allow me to refuse."

"Refuse, by all means; it will prove clearly and at once that this plan of yours will never answer for either of us."

"Oh yes it will. Let me persuade Melanie to give up the journey to Italy, and we can all remain at Exfort for the winter; but, perhaps," she added, hesitatingly, "perhaps you will consider this too great a sacrifice."

"I am afraid I must confess that it is none at all," answered Rupert, smiling; "parting from you on any terms would have been intolerably painful to me, and, as you say, I have employment enough and of all kinds here. A good many of my buildings will be roofed before Christmas, and the workmen can get on with the interiors during the cold weather. I shall have the society to which I have been accustomed too, as my regiment will still be quartered at Exfort. The shooting at Freilands is excellent, and there must be famous skating on the lake in January!"

Cyrilla sighed deeply; she saw that an effort would be made to banish her from his thoughts, and feared the diversity of occupations might soon enable him to dispense with her society altogether. "It seems,"

she observed, after a pause, "you rather enjoy the idea of a continuation of your garçon life?"

"It was not what I wished or intended," said Rupert, "but you command, and I obey. By the by, how long is this singular compact of loving indefinitely to continue?"

"On my part—for ever," replied Cyrilla, gravely.

"That is long," said Rupert, equally seriously. "Suppose, however, in consideration of our mortality, we were to name a time—say a score of years?"

"As you please," she answered, with difficulty restraining her tears at what she supposed the sarcasm of his words.

"At the end of twenty years," continued Rupert, "we shall have arrived at what the French politely call *un âge mûr*. Do you not think it possible that before that time Zorndorff may voluntarily release you from vows the fulfilment of which he cannot enforce?"

"Perhaps so," she answered, thoughtfully; "Melanie seemed to think, from what she overheard him say to Margaret, that had she lived all would have ended well. It was my last hope—could he have satisfied *her*, I should have had nothing more to desire."

"Another enigma!" said Rupert, shrugging his shoulders, but his sanguine temperament grasping instantly at even a shadow of hope, he added, "Let

us see what the next three months will bring us ; and in the mean time, I promise to love you still with all my heart and soul. Your so earnestly requesting me to do so is the strongest proof you could have given me that the engagement between you and Zorndorff is of a less serious nature than you have lately led me to suppose."

Unconscious of the overwhelming reproach contained in his last words, Rupert turned towards Melanie, who just then appeared at the door, and began to upbraid her for having made her escape just when they most wanted her.

Cyrilla's marriage had been of so dreamlike a description, that, though forced by circumstances to feel the legal importance of the act, the moral obligations had been very nearly forgotten in the anger caused by Zorndorff's desertion, and the scorn produced by the baseness of his motives. Some doubts of having a right to bestow her heart on her kind-hearted cousin had, it is true, occasionally disturbed her peace of mind, but the fallacious hopes continually held out to her by Zorndorff had removed her scruples as fast as they rose. Rupert's last words to her were like a flash of lightning, showing the precipice on which she stood, but throwing no light on the path that would lead her from it.

Let not those to whom trials of a somewhat similar nature are unknown, condemn her; still less

those who, surrounded by all that ought to keep their regard fixed on the man to whom they have pledged their faith, nevertheless err mentally as Cyrilla did! The worthiest of the latter could not condemn themselves more instantaneously and completely than the unhappy victim of Zorndorff's villany, as she now stood beside her cousin; his low eager conversation with her sister unheeded, and even the constant repetition of her own name failing to attract her attention, until Melanie, taking her hand, appealed to her in words that seemed to hiss in her ears: "Cyrilla, for Heaven's sake consider what you are doing! A compact of this kind is now actual madness—think of the jealousy, hatred, ungovernable anger that you will provoke—remember what the consequences may be to us all!"

Rupert, who was about to leave the room, paused, looked back, and watched Cyrilla's changing colour with anxiety.

"Stay, Rupert," she faltered, "stay—listen to Melanie—she is right—you were right—it cannot be....."

"Had Margaret lived," continued Melanie, fully aware that then or never would it be possible to break an agreement so fraught with danger to them all, "had Margaret lived, it might have been otherwise; but now Edouard is free, and, as soon as propriety permits, will undoubtedly endea-

your to repair the error which a combination of untoward circumstances forced him to commit."

Cyrilla's eyes flashed. "Melanie, you try my temper beyond endurance by speaking in this manner," she said, indignantly. "An *error* do you call such unprincipled selfishness—such....."

Rupert advanced quickly towards her. Cyrilla paused a moment, and then added, rapidly, "The past cannot be remedied, the future is still partly mine, and the proposal, which as a matter of course he will make a few months hence, I shall refuse without one moment's hesitation. You will oblige me by telling him so, should he consult you."

"I shall do no such thing. Dear Cyrilla, think of what you are saying."

"Oh, I have thought enough and suffered enough, too. His conduct has been so despicable, his motives have been so sordid, that I scarcely know whether I most scorn or abhor him!"

"I did not think her capable of such violence," said Melanie, turning to Rupert, who was listening attentively to every word, and watching every movement.

"She is an Adlerkron, and eloquent in anger," he observed, unable to conceal the pleasure which her last words gave him; "but it will not last long—see, it is past already."

It seemed to be so. The whole expression of

Cyrilla's countenance changed as she turned to Rupert; and, laying her hand on his arm, said, slowly and with evident effort, "It was wrong—selfish, of me to wish to bind you in any way. I have no right to control you.....no claim to your regard beyond what is due to me—as your cousin."

"But I give you a right, and admit that claim, and all others, too," he said, putting his arm round her. "I am yours to dispose of as you please. There is no sacrifice I am not ready to make if it in any way promote your happiness. Do you believe me?"

As she looked up to him, tears fell from his eyes upon her forehead, and the words she was about to utter were stifled in a passionate burst of grief.

"There now," he said, endeavouring to speak in his usual cheerful manner; "don't cry about it any more. Never think of me at all, but do and say whatever you like from this time forward; I shall have no right to complain after having given you full power to tyrannize to any extent you may think proper."

"Oh, Rupert.....from my tyranny you have nothing more to fear.....I am not likely ever again to forget my unfortunate....."

"I wish you would forget it, and let me see you cheerful and happy again," he said quickly, as he

gathered up his warlike accoutrements, and hurried out of the room.

“Would that he were less sensible, and had more sensibility!” ejaculated Melanie, as she drew her handkerchief across her eyes. “Even when acting magnanimously—nobly—he spoils all by speaking commonly and jocosely. What perversion!”

“Rather say—What perfection!” cried Cyrilla, warmly. “Can you not perceive that his motives for so doing are to diminish the sense of obligation? How differently would he act were he in Edouard’s place!—What do I say? He never could have been in such a position: the first dereliction from the right path would have been impossible to one so honourable.”

“Perhaps so,” said Melanie; “but, in charity, bestow some pity on Edouard now—he is suffering beyond all you can imagine.”

“He has cause,” murmured Cyrilla, thoughtfully.

“You blame him for his wife’s death, I know,” continued Melanie, “but unjustly. As you saw her that night, I have seen her repeatedly in the course of a single day. It is better that she died; no efforts of his could ever have made life other than a burden to her.”

“There are few lives,” said Cyrilla, “could they be minutely foreseen, to which an early death would not be preferable, especially when we reflect

that those who die young ever leave an image of youth, and beauty, and supposed excellence, on the mind of the survivors."

"I believe you are right," said Melanie. "One thing is certain, that the older we grow, the more unwilling we are to leave this world. When a child, death had no terrors; fears during illness were unknown to me: at a later period, I rather enjoyed a dangerous illness, as it enabled me to see the strength of my father's affection; a time followed when I would willingly have died—when, my fondest hopes blighted, and compelled by circumstances to marry a man of whom I felt an unconquerable dread—life had lost all charms for me! Yet by degrees I became accustomed to the comfortable monotony of my destiny,—and now..... now that the most desirable period of my woman's existence is past—now I begin to value life for itself, feel alarmed at illness, think of death as a terrible necessity, and can even imagine that clinging to this world experienced by the aged, often most strongly when nothing but vitality remains of all that had made life a blessing."

At this moment the President's heavy step was heard approaching through the adjoining rooms, and Melanie suddenly stopped with a shrinking motion and raising of the shoulders, a habit which she had acquired to hide embarrassment, but which eminently served to betray it. Cyrilla drew a piece

of work towards her, over which she bent, to hide the traces of recent grief. Useless care : the drooping mouth and crimson lips, the brimful eyelids, ready to overflow when they could do so unperceived, the listless attitude,—all became evident at a glance to a man who had his own reasons for watching the effect that his niece's death would produce upon her. He was surprised—perplexed ; and his scrutinizing eyes still rested on her while he addressed his wife.

“ Melanie, you have more influence than most people with Edouard,—go to him, and, if possible, induce him to consent to his wife's interment. Every physician within twenty miles round Exfort has pronounced her dead. The symptoms which have given him the idea that she still lives are by no means so uncommon as he supposes ; and a continuance of his present state of excitement may seriously affect his health, if not his mind.”

“ But,” said Melanie, hesitatingly, “ would it not be better to wait until there is some outward sign of decay ? The idea of any one being buried alive is the most horrible imaginable !”

“ Undoubtedly,” rejoined the President, “ and it is the duty of the survivors to take every possible precaution. About an hour ago, I tried to persuade Edouard to consent to an incision being made in

Margaret's foot, hoping by that means to convince him of her decease, but.....”

“That would not satisfy me,” cried Melanie, interrupting him; “I read lately an account of the exhumation of skeletons in an old churchyard, and it was discovered that a considerable number of them were turned upon their faces, which proved that the miserable beings had recovered sufficient consciousness to make a struggle for life..... O, Wilhelm, I wish you would promise to have some mortal wound inflicted on my body before you consign it to the grave!”

“Rather let me exact such a promise from you,” said the President, smiling; “I am five-and-twenty years your senior, and in the course of nature.....”

“Promise,” cried Melanie, eagerly. “You do not like speaking of death, and I may not again have an opportunity of making the request.”

Cyrilla looked up: she expected some ironical remark; but her brother-in-law appeared grave and thoughtful, as he answered: “I promise it; and should you survive me, do the same. Try now your powers of persuasion to the same effect on Edouard, about whom I feel extremely uneasy.”

CHAPTER II.

THE remains of the Countess Zorndorff, after having formed the sole topic of conversation in Exfort for several days, were at length consigned to the grave and consequent forgetfulness. The President, Melanie, and Cyrilla removed to Freilands, and the Bellegardes to their immediate vicinity ; the bourgeois proprietor of a large white-faced house, called Neuhof, having been induced for a consideration to place mansion, meadows, and young plantations at their disposition for the summer months. Openly avowing that the neighbourhood of Freilands, and no rural or rustic inclinations, had induced them to occupy this abode, they directly after their establishment there requested Rupert to have a gate made in the high wooden fence which separated them from his deer park, and a well-gravelled walk from it to his house.

Virginie was the only person not quite satisfied with these arrangements ; she felt that she had no plausible excuse for remaining any longer at Frei-

lands, and prepared to leave with a degree of reluctance that astonished Melanie and provoked Cyrilla. Rupert, however, no sooner perceived it than he began to urge her to remain with them, observing that "the rehearsals would soon begin at their little theatre, when it would be necessary for them to be together every day; that if obliged to make appointments with her he was quite sure he should never keep them, although they *had* so many duets to study; that Alphonse's comfort and health were worth her consideration, and it would be just as well that the little fellow should not be cuffed and teased by the Bellegarde children until he was stronger; and then he appealed to Melanie and Cyrilla for corroboration. The former said what she imagined necessary to satisfy him, the latter was perfectly silent; yet Virginie, still pretending to hesitate, allowed Rupert to urge, reason with, and laugh at her for a very considerable length of time before she consented, contriving to do so at last, as if conferring the greatest possible favour on him.

"It is much better that she stay with us," said Rupert, addressing Cyrilla after Virginie had left them; "I should have been preciousely inconvenienced by rehearsals at stated hours every day. I wish I could get off altogether now, as your refusal of this part has spoiled, as far as I am personally concerned, all the pleasure I expected from these theatricals."

"I hope not," replied Cyrilla, with some embar-

rassment; yet she found it impossible to repress a feeling of satisfaction that it was so. Considering it her duty henceforward to avoid everything that would bring her in immediate contact or communication with Rupert, she had declined the part assigned her in the opera about to be performed; and this her first effort had caused her a mixture of pain, irritation, and regret, that she found hard to endure with patience. It was at least a sort of consolation to her that Rupert openly avowed his disappointment; and for the twentieth time she listened to his covert reproaches with pleasure, vainly endeavouring to repress the feeling, and proving her sense of its selfishness by the effort to conceal it.

"I doubt Cyrilla's being able to play that part as well as Virginie," observed Melanie. "All the Lindesmars are perfect actresses."

"I know they are. I have often played with them, and have no objection to do so again; but it was the rehearsals and practisings with Cyrilla that However, there is no use in talking about it any more. One subject of mutual interest—one means of enjoying her society without interruption for some hours every day—is still left, and shall be put in practice this very present time. Cyrilla, you shall have your first lesson in riding to-day!"

She acquiesced, and left the room to put on her habit.

While Rupert gave the necessary directions, and afterwards, with a sort of pleased impatience, waited

for her appearance, he little suspected that he was putting not only her fortitude, but her affection, to the severest test. Essentially timid, the vague wish to learn to ride, which she had expressed one evening in the Circus, faded before the dreaded reality of trusting herself to a powerful, spirited animal, accustomed to the practised steady hand of a perfect rider. But what could she do? Rupert had purchased the horse for her; had taken the trouble himself to learn from Madame Vinci how to instruct her; and, in the innocence of her heart, she estimated this latter effort of kindness higher than it perhaps justly deserved. After having refused to take a part in his favourite opera, and every day finding some excuse to avoid going with him to his marsh, could she decline riding, which he evidently desired more than anything else? No—ride she must; and he should never know that she was afraid! With a trepidation which her maid mistook for eagerness, she dressed; and, hurrying through the hall, stood beside Rupert, looking very pale and very pretty,—her slight figure appearing still slighter from the dark-coloured, closely-fitting habit, and the absence of those starched under-garments which, flounced and furbelowed, usually give such amazing amplitude to the “female form divine.”

Two grooms stood at Selim’s head; a third caressed him in the most flattering manner, in order to induce him to remain perfectly quiet while Cyrilla learned to mount. She listened with great

attention to her cousin's directions, but her thoughts were too confused to understand them, and she consequently fell back repeatedly on his shoulder in a way that rather surprised yet did not displease him in the least. He laughed a little; and then, angry with herself for exhibiting so much awkwardness, she made a violent spring, slipped on the saddle, and disappeared altogether at the other side of the horse. It was then Rupert's turn to feel alarmed; and he became so to a degree by no means uncommon in such circumstances. He raised her to the saddle, and held her there, while Selim was being led very carefully backwards and forwards before the house; his own fear of an accident preventing him from observing the raised shoulders, stooping form, and pallid parted lips of the trembling equestrian.

A good rider from his earliest youth, and dauntless if not daring by nature, Rupert could form no idea of the tortures of timidity as far as his own person was concerned: for the first time in his life he was destined to feel them for Cyrilla. Every curvet of Selim's, and they were not a few, made him throw his arm round her, and stammer in the explanations he was giving about the curb, which, in all the unconsciousness of perfect ignorance, she pulled and twisted in a barbarous manner. Perceiving at length his anxiety, her self-possession returned, and with it a certain proportion of courage; so that when Melanie appeared on the balcony, she began to sit upright; and a distant view

of Virginie was sufficient to make her whisper to Rupert that, "if he mounted, she thought she could now get on famously." He did so; and, preceded by one groom, followed by another, and with his hand on Selim's bridle, they moved slowly and cautiously down the lime-tree avenue towards the forest.

The balcony was crowded with visitors, the President standing in the portico beneath, when Cyrilla gaily cantered up to the door on her return home.

"Why, this is an astonishing beginning!" cried the President, advancing to assist her to dismount. "I did not expect to see you ride in that way for six weeks at least, and should not have been surprised had a single trial sufficed to disgust you with such rough exercise. One never knows," he added, turning to Rupert, "what these women can do until they are tried! You look infinitely more heated and tired than she does."

"I daresay," said Rupert, laughing, "for I have been suffering every possible gradation, from uneasiness to actual fear. Prepared to find Cyrilla rather timid than otherwise, she absolutely terrified me by her recklessness!"

And this was perfectly true. Surprised and pleased at Rupert's anxiety and excessive care of her, Cyrilla first wished to reassure, then to astonish him. A lurking desire to obtain some of the same kind of admiration which he had bestowed

so unreservedly on Madame Vinci succeeded ; and for this purpose she feigned, then to her infinite amazement actually felt, a temerity foreign to her character, and was with difficulty prevented from turning into one of the reclaimed fields near the marsh, in order to leap the drains ! Let it not be supposed that, with all the facility of a heroine of romance, Cyrilla had learned to ride in the course of a couple of hours. Such was by no means the case. On the contrary, there was all the unsteadiness of a beginner in movement and posture. She was frequently thrown wildly about on her saddle, sat considerably to the left side, made most unnecessary use of her stirrup, and was altogether as awkward as any one so naturally graceful could be ; nor, though she succeeded in concealing her fears, were they by any means completely subdued. There were times when she expected that Selim's next spring would cast her to the ground ; others, when a slightly bounding gallop deprived her of breath, and gave her a sensation of being on the edge of a precipice. Yet even then she urged him forward, dashing on with a heedlessness that might have passed for courage, had it not too strongly resembled temerity. Such Rupert evidently considered it ; but the more he attempted to restrain, the more rash she became ; and at length he rode on beside her in a state of excitement little inferior to her own, and with precisely the same indefinite dread of some dangerous accident in perspective.

But nothing of the kind occurred either that day or any of the following, and then Rupert's cautions and fears changed into encouragements and openly expressed approbation. Cyrilla was soon a graceful and intrepid rider; any qualms of timidity which may have assailed her were so successfully checked, so perfectly controlled, that they remained undiscovered, and at last they ceased altogether, were completely absorbed, as any feeling may be by another and stronger; for these rides soon became the only means of undisturbed intercourse, the last remaining bond of union, between her and that cousin whose attentions she had herself forbidden, and who was now from circumstances obliged to obey her commands more literally than she liked, or ever perhaps intended.

Rupert's mornings were claimed unreservedly by his steward, the civil engineer, and numerous workmen employed in draining the marsh; latterly also still more by an architect who was inspecting the building of model cottages, a church, and school-house for the already populous village, the inhabitants of which, still living in temporary huts so little calculated for winter use, that buildings and builders had become of immense importance; and Rupert's mind was soon so occupied and interested on such subjects, that not only morning hours, but even after riding with Cyrilla in the afternoon, he might be seen day after day rushing down to the lake, on which soon after a long nar-

row boat became visible, gliding swiftly in the direction of the river. Cyrilla sighed—Virginie frowned, bit her lip, tapped with her foot, exhibited every symptom of ladylike impatience imaginable, then generally sent for her child, and went off to her sister at Neuhof, where, vexed and dispirited, she complained incessantly of Rupert's continued indifference. Adrienne listened at first with interest and sympathy, but at length got tired; and one day, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders, observed that "she had foreseen and foretold that it would be so—Rupert never had been, never would be, capable of the devotion to be found in other men—that if Virginie were married to him to-morrow, she would discover the day after that his copper mines, woods, plantations, moors, his regiment, or even a shooting-match, would all supersede her in his thoughts."

"No," persisted Virginie; "I am convinced that, if once married, his wife would be his first object—that she would be the most fortunate of women!"

"O, I have no doubt he would be good-natured and generous," rejoined Adrienne, "would pay long bills without looking at or wondering about them. I admit he is altogether so desirable that I should encourage you to persevere if I did not consider the case quite hopeless. Now Henri thinks it would be better, all things considered, if you could make up your mind about General Kersdorff—he is not young or handsome, but....."

“Don’t speak of him,” cried Virginie, impatiently. “You know I only tolerate him when I am trying to make Rupert jealous.”

“Rupert jealous! What an idea! Really, Virginie, for a clever woman you are wonderfully dull on some subjects. Why, scarcely a day passes in the course of which you do not in some way or other let him know how completely devoted to him you are, and then you expect him to be jealous!”

“I assure you,” cried Virginie, quickly, “I have not once, since I have been at Freilands, said a word that.....”

“Say! Of course not. What can a woman *say*? but your looks and manners express more than many words; and Henri is greatly amused at the quiet way in which Rupert receives the incense you offer him.”

“Henri is always unkind in his observations, merciless in his judgment of me.”

“He thinks you are very deep, and says I cannot fathom you.”

A slightly ironical smile played round Virginie’s lips at this remark, the justness of which she felt so completely, that she suddenly became desirous of knowing more of her brother-in-law’s opinions. “I suppose,” she said, after a pause, “I suppose he disapproved of my remaining at Freilands after you came here?”

“He thought it a strong measure, and hoped you would manage with your usual tact; for he

more than suspected that not only Cyrilla, but even dear Melanie herself, when not actually writing verses, perceived your.....your.....”

“My what?”

“Your.....manœuvres.”

“You may tell him, Adrienne, that had *he* been less disagreeable to me I should have returned to his house—that instead of manœuvring, as he supposes, I have been quite explicit with Rupert, who knows perfectly well that Henri and I disagree, and almost dislike each other. Impropriety there was none in my remaining at Freilands, when Melanie herself said.....”

“O, as to that,” cried Madame de Bellegarde, carelessly; “I must say I think all scruples about Rupert’s house, or Rupert’s self, extremely ridiculous as far as we are concerned; but Henri never can be made to understand the nature of an intimacy commenced in childhood, and continued without intermission through life. Such intimacies have their advantages no doubt, but also their disadvantages. Only imagine Rupert taking me aside yesterday evening, and telling me I ought to send Hortense to school; that she would be completely spoiled if I kept her at home; and was already an astounding coquette for her years!”

“Nonsense!”

“Fact, I assure you. I was dreadfully offended at first, for though Rupert did not in direct words say it, I could perceive that he a.....considered

my example and a.....all that sort of thing you know.....but afterwards I was obliged to laugh when he produced an execrably written French note from her, in which she proposed a *rendezvous* with him at the Deer-Park gate; she wished so much that he would row her on the lake! Did you ever hear any thing so amusing?"

"You consider this matter too lightly," observed Virginie, slightly contracting her brows.

"Why that is only half the affair, and as Rupert said, would have appeared quite natural, and made no impression whatever on him, had she not previously, with great mystery, and some real or affected embarrassment, bestowed on him an ell or two of red ribbon, and a lock of her hair! It seems he returned these precious gifts, and probably lectured her....."

"As she deserved, I hope," cried Virginie, severely.

"Perhaps more—for, after crying profusely for some time, she told him in excuse or justification, I really do not remember which he called it, 'that mamma often walked with Klemmhein in the park, and had given him a gold pencil-case, and.....'—In short, it was quite evident that Mademoiselle Joubert had talked of me more than was necessary, and had, moreover, neglected her duties as governess in a most unpardonable manner—No *femme de chambre* ever wrote more incorrectly than Hortense; and though I did not say so to Rupert, I know that her attempts in German are still

worse. He quite brought me round to his opinion at last—She certainly is very ignorant, and..... and.....remarkably tall for her age; so I promised to use all my influence with Henri to have her sent to some famous *pension* at Strasburg."

"Strasburg! and why there?"

"The best place for learning French and German equally well—or ill—as the case may be; but it seems that Melanie made all sorts of inquiries about the school three years ago, when Rupert placed a god-daughter of his there."

"A god-daughter! I never heard of his having such an appendage," observed Virginie.

"O, he has a godson too, his tutor's children—all right and proper. I remember Melanie telling me something long ago about his having deposited a sum of money somewhere for their education; so that if he should by chance break his neck or be drowned.....

"Adrienne, for goodness sake don't talk in that light way!"

"Rupert's own words, I assure you; but Melanie supposed he made the arrangement to put an end to the letters of thanks perpetually written to him by the children when their bills were paid. It was just what one might expect from him; you know he is such a dear creature about things of that kind; and, indeed, even when he preaches propriety, he does it in an off-hand, worldly-wise, intelligible sort of way, that is, at least, very en-

durable. I do not know any one whose advice I should more willingly ask were I in any kind of dilemma.....By the by, have you heard again from that inexorable *marchande de modes* at Turin?"

"No. Her shameless bill hangs like the sword of Damocles over my head, and I dread the post-hour on account of it."

"It would have been better to have sent it with the others to your father-in-law," said Adrienne.

"Impossible," replied Virginie, shaking her head; "only just imagine an old man, who has spent a quiet life in the country, poring over a thing of that kind: besides, it is a sort of double concern, her husband being jeweller and money-lender, or rather a usurer, to whom in my distress I was obliged to apply; he cheated me most unscrupulously, even in the first instance scarcely giving me more than half the money of the loans placed to my account; and these loans, with the accumulated interest, now amount to a sum of which my father-in-law would undoubtedly dispute the payment, and I should fall in his esteem, without a chance of relief from my difficulties."

"Have you never thought....." began Madame de Bellegarde, sedulously rubbing a spot on her glove with her handkerchief, "of.....applying.....to Rupert.....you know his unhesitating....."

"No, no, no, no," cried Virginie, quickly, "anything rather than that! I thought of asking Vic-

tor to assist me. Grandpapa is liberal to him, though not to us."

"Why, Virginie, have you forgotten that Victor has been six months in Paris? That he is living, and must continue to live, at an expensive hotel here, until he is placed somewhere or other definitively, of which, too, at present there seems but little chance?"

"I know all that, but he is prudent, and always has money.....it would be merely a loan, you know....."

"Yes; but one that might inconvenience him, whereas Rupert would consider it a trifle not worth talking or thinking about."

"It is not a trifle," said Virginie, in a low voice; "I only confessed part of the sum to you."

"Virginie!"

"You need not look so horrified; I think the woman might perhaps be satisfied with the half in the way of part payment, and wait my convenience for the rest. I have written to beg of her to give me a little more time; but there is little chance of her doing so when she hears that my father-in-law has paid all our other creditors. I am really very unfortunate—most unhappy!"

"I should not have thought so during the rehearsal yesterday."

"Of course not," said Virginie, "nor afterwards either. I don't choose to disgust Rupert with a

sorrowful countenance. Nothing he dislikes so much."

"I am not quite so sure of that," said Madame de Bellegarde, musingly.

"But I am," rejoined Virginie; "I know it makes him quite uncomfortable seeing any one he likes looking ill or unhappy, and if he cannot remove the cause of their sorrow, he avoids them."

"He does not avoid Cyrilla," said Madame de Bellegarde; "and I never saw any one looking so perfectly unhappy as she does; but perhaps he thinks he can remove the cause, and in that case....."

"No—I don't—think—he can," answered Virginie, slowly; "I am myself scarcely able to account for it now. Her grief about Margaret's death I should have considered a good piece of acting, had it not lasted so long, and had she not really endeavoured to conceal it in every possible way. I can only suppose that either she imagines the poor thing was wronged and ill-treated on her account, or that perhaps she herself has now ceased to care for Zorndorff, and rather dreads than wishes a renewal of his attentions. I have often lately feared it might be so."

"Not at all improbable," said Madame de Bellegarde; "for my part, I almost think her disinterested and romantic enough to prefer Victor to every one else."

"O that I were sure of that!" exclaimed Vir-

ginie, clasping her hands and looking upwards; "but I fear, I greatly fear, she merely tolerates our poor brother. Come, Alphonse," she added, turning to her child, "come, it is time for us to go home—*home!* Would that Freilands were indeed our home!"

"I wish it were," said Madame de Bellegarde. "How nice it would be, could we arrange everything after the fashion of the last act of a comedy—you and Rupert with joined hands; General Kersdorff, after a moment's natural hesitation, offers his to Julie, who of course accepts it joyfully; Henri discovers that I am an angel, entreats forgiveness for his unjust suspicions, ridiculous jealousy, and so forth"

"And Cyrilla?" asked Virginie, laughing.

"O, as to Victor and Cyrilla, they are both young—can wait, and might do better. Let us leave them out of our play altogether."

"I wish we could do so as easily in life as in our theatre," said Virginie. "I suppose you have heard that Cyrilla has also refused to take a part in the melodrama written for us by Melanie? Rupert looked so disappointed, that I offered my services directly, though I dislike Melanie's florid language and weak plot beyond all expression."

"Well, do you know I thought it all very nice and pretty, the evening Cyrilla read it to us," said Madame de Bellegarde, "and you seemed to like it too."

"I liked Cyrilla's reading, which would have made a worse thing appear tolerable."

"Ah—to be sure—it may have been that—I never heard any one read so before, and was quite astonished at her courage. I am sure I couldn't do it."

"I dare say not—few people can—but it was not quite so admirable and astonishing as the President and Rupert seemed to think; it was absurd their saying they preferred reading even to singing as an accomplishment."

"Why, it has its advantages," said Madame de Bellegarde, looking unusually wise and speaking rather didactically; "it is less noisy in the acquirement and practice, is independent of accompanying instruments, modulates the voice for ordinary speaking, and"

"Quite true, dear Adrienne," said Virginie, endeavouring to suppress a smile, "but I have heard all that before, you know, from Melanie. Be sure to have Hortense taught to read at Strasburg."

"Taught!"

"Of course. Surely you did not imagine that any one could read as Cyrilla does, by inspiration? She has had the best instruction that could be obtained; and when one considers all the advantages she has had, it is astonishing after all to find her so common-place a person."

"O, Virginie!"

"I assure you I think so, and cannot discover

what people find to admire in her, especially now when she will not sing, says she cannot make any more amusing sketches, and does not even assist at our theatricals or tableaux. She makes up for all to Rupert; however, by pretending to take an interest in the buildings that are being erected near that ugly bog. I wish you could see her studying the plans, and gathering up the words of wisdom as they fall from the lips of that most terrific man the President."

"Are you also afraid of him?" asked Madame de Bellegarde.

"Beyond measure: he is even more cynical and severe than his nephew, without the personal beauty and strong feelings that so nearly cover the multitude of Zorndorff's sins; to say nothing of his having at least the one excellent quality of never interfering with other people's purposes, unless they absolutely cross his own; while the President, either consciously or unconsciously, is perpetually marring any little innocent plots that may be going on around him. Had it not been for his cold scrutinizing glances, I should have got up a mania for marshes to please Rupert long ago."

The sisters looked at each other, and laughed merrily.

"*Allons*, Alphonse," cried Virginie, raising her child from the ground, "*Courons*, *mon enfant*, that we may have time to make ourselves pretty for dinner."

“Make ourselves pretty?” repeated the child.

“The President,” said Virginie, looking back with a toss of the head, “would tell me to endeavour to give my son habits of punctuality, instead of instilling the poison of personal vanity into his young mind. It is agreeable to have to listen to speeches of that kind continually, without daring to answer them; but a time may come, when even Rupert’s presence will not impose silence on me!”

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Virginie, a couple of hours later, with a good deal of affected haste, entered the drawing-room at Freilands, expecting to see the President comparing his watch with the different clocks that in various forms adorned the rooms, she was surprised to find Melanie, quite alone, waiting to receive the guests expected from Exfort, for the purpose of joining in the full rehearsal of the opera, which was to take place in the course of the evening. Her practised jealous eye had scarcely had time to discover all that was new and tasteful in her companion's dress, before her brother, Victor de Lindesmar, and a number of people arrived; and Melanie began to excuse Rupert's absence, by saying, that he had persuaded the President to inspect his improvements, and give an opinion about a road which he purposed making through the bog to the village—a much pleasanter way of reaching it than in a boat, and of very great importance to the inhabitants. Then followed a long discussion

about roads and bogs in general, which so little interested Virginie, that, beckoning her brother, she walked out into the balcony, and wondered what *could* have induced the President to forget the dinner-hour.

"It seems," said Victor de Lindesmar, "he persuaded Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron to go with them, and I can easily imagine her making people forget both time and place."

"Nevertheless," rejoined Virginie, "the dirt, damp, and fog will, I suppose, remind them at last that they are in a bog. I hate the place—and even the words marsh or moorlands. One hears of nothing, from morning till night, but drainage and irrigation, sluices and canals, turf, dust, and peat-compressing machines!"

"Very engrossing subjects of conversation," said her brother, "when one has a personal interest in the business, and even, as a matter of speculation or curiosity, by no means uninteresting either. I am sorry I refused Adlerkron's invitation to go with him to-day; when I did so, I had not the least idea that his cousin was to be of the party."

"So he asked you to go with him?" said Virginie, thoughtfully. "Could he have intended you to take care of Cyrilla while he talked to the President?"

"I believe that such may have been his very kind intentions, and therefore the more regret my refusal; but she has so invariably remained with

her sister lately, that I never doubted I should find her in the rose room, and be permitted to accompany them to the garden, and afterwards sit under the trees in the lawn as usual."

"So this affair with Cyrilla is really getting serious, Victor?"

"Quite so, I assure you. Directly I have commenced my career, no matter how subordinate my situation, I intend to write to my grandfather."

"You had better first speak to her," observed Virginie.

"I expect to have but few difficulties to encounter in that quarter," answered her brother, with a satisfied smile; for with that pleasing appreciation of self, not uncommon in men of his age—perhaps of any age—he had mistaken Cyrilla's politeness for regard; her careless toleration of attentions, to which she was accustomed from every one, to an especial encouragement of his own views. "I only wish I were as sure of my grandfather's consent," he added, after a moment's pause; "for I greatly fear that he and my mother, after the manner of provident parents, have already found out some unexceptionable *partie* for me in the neighbourhood of Amboise."

"So," said Virginie, hesitatingly, "you only fear difficulties from grandpapa, and have never had cause to suppose that.....Cyrilla.....cares.....for Rupert?"

"To be sure she cares for him, as everybody

who knows him must—he is the best-natured fellow in the world: not at all to be feared as a rival, however, as he has not time at present to be even respectably attentive to any woman—least of all to a cousin! And I, you know, have holidays now—no sort of occupation but to make myself agreeable.”

“Very true,” said Virginie, “and Cyrilla certainly does talk to you.....or rather listen to you talking—sometimes—often in fact.....and though not always attentive.....”

“Ah, here she comes,” cried Victor de Lindesmar, leaning over the balustrade, and bowing repeatedly, in a vain endeavour to attract the attention of the three people who were advancing quickly towards the house in eager conversation. “How charming—how interesting she looks!”

“The black mud on her dress does look rather interesting,” said Virginie, laughing; “perhaps you also admire the unconcern with which she exhibits her boots incrustated with dirt and powdered with fresh dust?”

“I do—I do,” cried Victor, warmly; “it is precisely that unconcern—that carelessness, which makes her so irresistible.”

“I’m sure *I* have no objection to your finding her so,” murmured Virginie.

“She forms such a contrast to all the other women I have ever known,” he continued.

“I don’t think you know much about her,” said

Virginie with some pique, for she imagined there was a slight reproach in her brother's words.

"Do I not?" he rejoined, quickly; "then if you do, it is your duty to tell me; and if your words have any particular meaning, I must insist on....."

At this moment Cyrilla looked up, smiled, and playfully shaking her soiled dress, hurried into the house, followed by Rupert, but not before he had flourished his straw hat in the air towards Virginie, and pointed to the President, who was looking at his watch with a mixture of astonishment and dismay.

The rehearsal was like all such affairs at amateur theatres, a matter of pleasure, not business. There was a good deal of jesting and laughing, flirting and mocking; some good acting and very tolerable singing, but to the surprise of all who were not inmates of Freilands, it was proved beyond a doubt that Rupert, though acknowledged to be the best musician of the party, did not know his parts. He laughingly accused Virginie of having neglected to practise with him: she retorted that his whole time had been latterly divided between his marsh and rides with his cousin; and then he promised to devote the fortnight which still intervened before the grand representation took place to the study of his duets with her.

Mr and Madame de Bellegarde, the President, and Melanie, left the stage-box, where they had

been amused and by no means silent spectators of all that had been said and sung. Count Lindesmar prepared to follow them, but stopped when he perceived that Cyrilla showed no inclination to move.

Virginie had walked up the now open stage with Rupert to a large window at the back of the house ; and though apparently drawn towards it merely to look at the calm summer night's sky, they continued to stand there talking while all the others dispersed to return to the cheerful rooms and tea that awaited them below stairs.

" Do you wish to see the effect of the moonlight entering through that window after the lamps are extinguished ? " asked Victor de Lindesmar, leaning over the front of the box, and following the direction of Cyrilla's eyes.

She murmured something about her cousin and his sister looking as if they were just going to perform some interesting scene together.

" I don't know much of Adlerkron's talents that way," said Lindesmar, laughing ; " but that Virginie is acting now as much as she has been doing for the last two or three hours, I can solemnly affirm. She is always acting, even with her nearest relations, which makes her very charming perhaps, but very bewildering—at least to me."

Cyrilla did not answer ; she watched the figures as they stood in the bright moonlight, with an interest that surprised her companion. It was evi-

dent that no common or indifferent subject was being discussed, for Rupert listened with deep attention—Virginie's handkerchief was pressed to her eyes with a haste and trepidation of very striking effect, and at length a letter was drawn from her pocket, which she read slowly and with frequent interruptions.

“By Jove! she's consulting him about the General's proposal,” cried Victor, “expecting him, in all probability, to forbid the banns; it's an old affair that between your cousin and my sister, Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron, and would have come off very satisfactorily four years ago, they tell me, if it had not been for some unfortunate mistakes and misunderstandings.”

“Indeed! I was not aware of that,” said Cyrilla, quietly.

“The particulars I have never heard,” continued Victor de Lindesmar; “for after being so long separated from my sisters, they bestow their confidence rather sparingly upon me; but I hope all will go on well now, as I should like Adlerkron amazingly for a brother-in-law, he is such a capital fellow—just the thing for Virginie. How well she looks in the moonlight, and how picturesquely she stands there! I had no idea she was so graceful!”

Nor had Cyrilla; neither had she ever observed that Virginie used so much action when speaking; but her various and unceasing efforts to attract Rupert, Cyrilla had long watched with displeasure,

if not uneasiness ; and now Lindesmar's words, though proceeding from a false representation of facts, convinced her, not only that Virginie herself was more in earnest than she had hitherto supposed, but that all her family entertained hopes, if not actual expectations, of so desirable a connexion. An intolerable sensation of anxiety, a succession of irrepressible doubts and fears, overwhelmed her, and for a few moments almost impeded respiration ; yet so fruitful is the human mind in expedients to satisfy itself, that, when she rose to leave the box, she had already convinced herself that Rupert's happiness was so much dearer to her than her own, that the mental pain she was suffering proceeded altogether from anxiety lest he might become entangled in the snares of an artful woman, rendered desperate by a tarnished reputation and pecuniary embarrassments.

As she moved through the impeding chairs, Lindesmar suddenly clapped his hands, and cried out, " Bravo, encore, encore ! " Cyrilla turned back, and once more looked on the stage. Rupert and Virginie were advancing quickly towards the front, where the light of the last remaining lamp fell full upon their faces ; the former laughed, the latter looked annoyed, but endeavoured to respond to her brother's fluent jests, which continued without intermission while they returned to the drawing-room together. Before they entered, Rupert stopped, and Cyrilla heard him say, " Virginie,

after all, I must give you some advice on this occasion. Do not let any one influence you in your second choice—Bellegarde's opinion is of no consequence whatever, as he certainly does not value you as you deserve."

"Perhaps so, but he knows all the difficulties of my situation, and there is one which—but I would rather tell you of it some other time."

"Whenever you please,—the sooner the better, if I can in any way be of use to you."

The evening passed quickly and pleasantly, as most evenings do when people know each other intimately, and are not embarrassed by unnecessary attentions towards or deference for each other; but it was not until all excepting the Bellegardes and Lindesmars had left, that Rupert produced a long alphabetical list of his friends and acquaintance, and said it was now time to make a selection for the first representation of the opera.

They seated themselves round a table, and a very animated discussion began, in which even the President did not disdain to join as he walked up and down the room with steady step and slow.

It would be easy here to give a tolerable sketch of the society in and about Exfort, and the temptation is strong, when the recollection of the brilliant precedents which might be adduced for this practice presents itself. It is true, a ball-room or club-house is the most approved place for novelists, through the medium of some satirical ladies or

gentlemen, to parade and inspect their fellow-creatures, and show their knowledge of human nature. Yet Melanie, with her list of high-sounding names before her, pencil in hand, and politely interrogative expression of countenance, surrounded by a group of figures seemingly vying with each other in ease of attitude and freedom of remark, would answer the purpose equally well, and even have the advantage of an equivocal sort of originality..... Nevertheless we refrain, knowing from wearisome experience that a description of people who are not concerned in the events related seldom interests, and but too often tires the reader.

It was late when Melanie came to the end of her "scroll," as she chose to call the list; and the last name on it, in consequence of the alphabetical order of succession, was Zorndorff's.

"O," cried Madame de Bellegarde, rising; "we need not discuss him, he belongs to *us*, and will be invited as a matter of course."

"I only wonder he has not been here before," said Julie, pushing back her chair; "one really ought to do something to console and enliven him."

"It appears to me," observed Rupert, after a hasty glance towards Cyrilla, "that there would be a sort of indelicacy in supposing it possible that such a gay affair as private theatricals could be consonant to his feelings at present, especially as we shall afterwards dance until sunrise."

"I cannot agree with you, Rupert," said the

President, stopping short in his walk. "The continuation of Edouard's grief cannot bring back his wife from the grave, and it is scarcely to be expected that he will mourn for ever."

"Certainly not," observed Mr de Bellegarde; "King David's mode of practising resignation is well worthy of imitation."

"If you have no objection to invite him, Rupert," continued the President, apparently unconscious of the support offered to his opinions; "I confess I should like to have him among us, and to see him restored to cheerfulness again."

"I merely offered an opinion," said Rupert, "and Melanie is quite at liberty to do as she pleases." If he expected to find an ally in his cousin, he was mistaken; she had not courage to attempt a word of opposition to her husband's wishes, and the name was underlined in silence.

Soon after, the President began to prolong his walk into the adjacent rooms, from one of which, according to his usual custom, he silently retired for the night. The party broke up after having made some arrangements for the ensuing day; but still unwilling to part, or tempted by the fineness of the night, they all prepared for a moonlight walk through the park.

"I suppose," said Julie to Cyrilla, as chance placed them side by side on the gravel walk, "I suppose you have heard of Zorndorff's eccentricities?"

"I have not heard even his name for more than a month until this evening," answered Cyrilla.

"Only imagine, he has left his beautiful house, barred the windows, locked the doors, dismissed the servants, sold his horses, and—returned to his old lodgings in the town!"

"Probably the rooms in his house gave rise to unpleasant reminiscences," observed Cyrilla.

"Very likely. I shouldn't wonder if Margaret haunted that library—he never could keep her out of it, you know: even on the night of the last ball, she found her way there through the conservatory, after having tried all the other entrances in vain. They say, she entered by one of the windows. Did you ever hear of such a thing, in a ball-dress, covered with flowers too? But she certainly did look unusually wild that night, with her water-lilies and green dress; and I never shall forget her face, as she came up to me, when I was dancing the cotillon, to ask if I had seen Zorndorff, or Melanie, or you.....In order to get rid of her, I said that I was sure he had escaped to the library as soon as the dancing had recommenced, and, by all accounts, there she found him."

Cyrilla shuddered as she recalled the meeting that had taken place; but she did not speak, and Julie continued: "Henri and Victor have been to see him repeatedly lately; but until to-day, I have not been able to persuade Adrienne to go, though

she knows that Melanie visits him regularly every week."

"Melanie is his aunt," observed Cyrilla, quietly.

"Well, we are his friends, and very much pleased he was to see us too; he became quite cheerful, and made me tell him all about the rehearsals; he knew that you had refused to play, and said, that from all accounts you were amusing yourself perfectly well with my brother Victor."

"Which you of course contradicted," said Cyrilla, quickly.

"Not I! What business is it of his? You have as good a right to amuse yourself with Victor as I have to amuse myself with him; and so I told him. He then showed Adrienne his little suite of rooms, which, considering that he now professes to despise wealth, were furnished with great luxury. In one of them we found Rickey, the niece of that odious woman Vica. It seems poor Margaret allowed her to learn cookery under their *chef*, and she now manages Zorndorff's reduced household for him in a very satisfactory manner, as he gravely assured us in her presence."

Here some of the others joined them, and the conversation became general.

On their return home, Melanie and Cyrilla entered the house, and retired at once to their respective apartments. Virginie lingered in the moonlight, talking to Rupert, and imperceptibly induc-

ing him to loiter about with her. When Cyrilla, an hour later, extinguished her light, and timidly peeped through the half open jalousie of her window, she saw them still walking up and down before the house, conversing earnestly.

Virginie was too well skilled in the metaphysics of the heart, as they regard the passion of love, to be satisfied with the progress which the last month had enabled her to make in Rupert's regard. She had, it is true, renewed the unreserved intercourse of early years, but it had been effected by disguising her real feelings under the mask of ordinary friendliness, and she was tired of the restraint, impatient of the slow progress of her plans. Greatly mortified at the total failure of the rather vulgar ruse which she had employed that evening, of endeavouring to rouse him from his apathy by exhibiting the written professions of love made her by another, and asking his advice, she did not now return to the subject—rather avoided it; but she spoke with passionate eloquence and without any sort of reserve of her unfortunate marriage, and consequent wretchedness, casting aside all restraint in the relation of a series of domestic horrors, the recollection of which seemed to have been engraved in words of fire on her memory. Shocked and amazed, Rupert listened to a recital of scenes of coarseness and depravity which he had hitherto supposed altogether confined to the lowest and least educated class of society, and his sympathy

proved a but too great encouragement to his companion to continue—what she ought never to have begun. That she finally convinced Rupert of her husband's utter worthlessness and her own perfect innocence, need scarcely be said. Naturally flattered at the immense confidence placed in him, his offers of advice and assistance in the arrangement of her affairs were freely given, and as freely accepted. She confessed having some debts. How could it be otherwise, when de Rubigny had latterly spent everything at the gaming table, or on others, and had compelled her to raise money for herself and her child in every possible manner, forcing her on some occasions to submit to unheard of imposition!

“All that is at an end,” cried Rupert cheerfully, as they stopped before the hall-door. “If I cannot make you forget the past, I may at least watch over your future life, now that you have given me permission to do so.”

Perhaps Virginie misunderstood the meaning of these words. There was a joyousness and fervour in her expressions of gratitude, as she clung to his arm, when entering the house, which would have been less agreeable to Rupert had he known that Cyrilla's tearful eyes were following all their movements.

CHAPTER IV.

RUPERT'S rehearsals with Virginia and the other performers increased in frequency and length from day to day. The music-room was often deserted for the theatre, whence the sound of the orchestra occasionally penetrated through an open door or window even to Melanie's drawing-room, where Cyrilla usually sat, patiently awaiting her cousin's leisure to ride with her.

These rides had not only been much curtailed of late, but on some occasions Rupert had excused himself altogether ; and one day when, considerably past the usual time, he entered the room for this purpose, he was not a little disconcerted at finding Cyrilla already in her habit, and evidently unprepared for a disappointment. With undissembled annoyance, he explained that in consequence of Virginia having only that moment returned from Neuhof, where she had spent the morning, he feared when the rehearsal with her was ended it would be too late for them to go out.

Cyrilla said it was of no consequence whatever, and looked out of the window with a very well got-up air of unconcern ; but Melanie, who was present, observed, somewhat discontentedly, that " It almost appeared as if Virginie, on purpose, chose the hours that would interfere with Cyrilla's rides."

" O no," cried Rupert, quickly, " what motive could she have for doing so ?"

" I leave that for you to discover," she answered ; " but I am sorry that Cyrilla so often loses her rides, as Wilhelm says they are improving her health wonderfully, and making her look quite as she used to do."

" Cyrilla," said Rupert, endeavouring to catch a glimpse of her averted face, " after hearing this, you may be sure that nothing shall ever again prevent my being in attendance at the appointed time. In fact, being deprived so frequently of both your and Melanie's society had made me find these rehearsals inexpressibly tiresome and disagreeable."

" *Indeed!*" said Cyrilla, with very strong emphasis.

" So much so, that I assure you I have often been disgracefully inattentive. How could it be otherwise, with thoughts so continually wandering....."

" To your workmen perhaps ?"

" More frequently to you and Lindesmar, who have latterly completely distracted my attention by sitting under the oak-tree just opposite the windows of the music-room."

“ But Melanie, the Bellegardes, and visitors innumerable, have been there also,” said Cyrilla, smiling; “ why must we bear the whole blame?”

“ Because I only saw you, and Lindesmar’s white teeth and black eyes,” replied Rupert, laughing. “ But, jesting apart, Cyrilla, I think you are beginning to allow him to pay you a little—a very little more attention than is exactly necessary, or quite prudent, all things considered.”

“ And, jesting apart, Rupert,” she rejoined with some archness, but more earnestness, “ *I* think you are beginning to allow Virginie to pay you more attention than is exactly necessary, or at all prudent.....that is, if you do not mean to.....to.....”

“ No,” said Rupert, “ I don’t mean to.....to..... any more than you mean to.....to.....”

The entrance of Virginie at that moment was rather agreeable to Cyrilla than otherwise, and at Rupert’s request she went with them to the music-room, and for an hour made herself generally useful, singing second soprano, or even bass, as they required it.

When she left them, Rupert watched in vain for her appearance under the oak-tree. Melanie was there, and Lindesmar, looking rather disconsolate; and a little later, the Bellegardes, and some other families from the immediate neighbourhood, with children and lapdogs in the usual profusion—and chairs were carried out of the hall—and tables were spread with fruit and cakes—and groups of people

walked about—and mirthful youthful laughter ascended to the window which Rupert threw wide open.

“That lawn is a gay place,” he said, leaning out, “and the view of the lake, with the sun shining on it, is really very exhilarating—I wonder how it will look in winter?”

“Cheerful enough when covered with skaters,” answered Virginie; “and that it will be, as you and your regiment remain at Exfort. It is even pretty generally known that you intend to reside here in future, and are at present meditating the choice of a companion for life. As yet, you have managed successfully to baffle all efforts to discover the person most favoured; but of course once you have decided there will be little delay or difficulty afterwards.”

“Such has not been my fate, Virginie; on the contrary, your predictions three years ago have been fulfilled to the letter.”

“Cyrilla did not care for you then,” said Virginie, looking up; “but now?.....now?”

“Now—” said Rupert, hesitating, “there is an impediment not to be easily overcome.”

“It will never be overcome—” cried Virginie, quickly, “never—never! Cyrilla has made a promise to Count Zorndorff, from which no consideration on earth will induce him to release her.”

“Who told you that?”

“Zorndorff himself—he says, that though now

justly angry with him, he is convinced that her affection will eventually triumph over her resentment ; and this is my opinion also."

Rupert smiled contemptuously, and shook his head.

" Believe me, Rupert, you are wasting your best years in efforts to obtain the regard of a girl who never did, and never will, care for you. Her indifference about Madame Vinci ought to have convinced you."

" I do not exactly understand....."

" Why, can you believe it possible that, if she loved you the least in the world, she would have chosen bracelets for that woman, or assisted you to throw bouquets and garlands at her, as I am told she did, night after night in the Circus ?"

" And," said Rupert, twisting his moustachios, and looking down on his companion, while his eyes sparkled with ill-suppressed mirth, " do you think that an Adlerkron would condescend to be jealous of the directress of an equestrian troop, even though she were the queen of the Amazons herself ?"

Virginie turned away, and tears of vexation rose to her eyes at what she supposed a taunt, but which had not been intended as such. When Rupert spoke again, it was to tell her frankly, that until Cyrilla actually consented to marry Zorndorff, he would not believe that all chance was lost for him.

Had Virginie known this sooner, it might perhaps have prevented her from forming plans and

indulging expectations so totally groundless as hers of late had been. But Zorndorff's communication, joined to Cyrilla's very studied avoidance of Rupert since Margaret's death, had raised new hopes, which, now suddenly and totally destroyed by the last few words, caused such bitter disappointment that she could make no effort to conceal her feelings as, in a low faltering voice, she thanked him for his confidence, but—wished he had bestowed it sooner.

Rupert bit his lip and coloured violently as he turned over some music on a table near him, while endeavouring to recall his words and actions, as far as Virginie was concerned, during the last two months. Ever generous even in his inmost thoughts, self-reproach became the feeling uppermost in his mind, and, all-unconscious of the arts that had been used to attract and enchain him, he feared that he had, by his self-indulgence in her society, again entangled the affections of one whose only weakness, in his idea, was the too great trust she had ever reposed in him, and who, by his silence respecting his continued attachment to Cyrilla, had been led to suppose him as free to choose again as she was herself.

He stammered some excuses, to which she listened with half-averted head, and a face glowing with the vermilion-tinted blush peculiar to brunettes; but at length, deeply regretting having so uselessly betrayed herself, and fearing total estrangement on

his part, she turned round, and endeavoured to remove his embarrassment and her own by talking for a few moments, rather incoherently it is true, of her unalterable friendship, but ending with some very plausible reproaches for his silence, and the want of trust in her made evident by it.

Never were reproaches more joyfully received, more willingly answered ; but while he, with a light step and lighter heart, left the room, she stood motionless on the spot where he left her, overwhelmed with confusion and grief, and asking herself the question—" Have I betrayed myself or not? Why," she murmured, covering her burning face with her hands, " oh, why did I not remain silent, and leave him to imagine what he pleased? How much more free would now have been my sphere of action ! But.....I will not give up all hope yet.....why should I? We are both still young, and Zorndorff is not a man to yield to any one, or for any consideration. I must speak to him, however, as soon as possible,—must tell him to insist on the fulfilment of the promise made him by Cyrilla. He laughed at the idea of Victor as a rival,—doubted me when I spoke of Rupert :—What will he say now? "

Throwing herself into the nearest chair, she then began to meditate on the course that remained for her to pursue. More than suspecting that Rupert had seen through her last feminine artifice, and aware that he knew her to be a proud woman, she

resolved upon that consciousness to act. Instead of avoiding him, she would continue to seek his society, but assuming henceforward a studied reserve of manner, would let him only at well-chosen intervals perceive the efforts she was making to conceal a passion so strong as at times to cause forgetfulness of prudence, and induce her to break through all the restraints imposed upon her sex. And so judicious was her art, so incomparable her skill in forming every look, tone, and gesture, according to her plans, that only those who have suffered from the wiles of a perpetual actress can form an idea of the trials to which Rupert's patience was likely to be put.

CHAPTER V.

IN the meantime, Cyrilla, determined in future to avoid Lindesmar, descended one of the back staircases ; and, having changed her dress, passed through the gardens, and hurried on to the silence of the beech-wood. Unobservant of the summer splendour around her, she sauntered on in deep thought, under the cool shade of trees, supposed to be as salubrious to human as destructive to vegetable life. Rupert's last remark about Lindesmar, proving so clearly that no interests or variety of occupation had made him forgetful or unobservant of her, was the only slight consolation she could find during the contemplation of her calamitous embarrassments, which the prospect of soon again seeing Zorndorff brought vividly to her mind ; and she dwelt long on the pleasant recollection, fancifully comparing it to one of those fitful gleams of sunshine that, occasionally penetrating the branches above her, though affording

no actual warmth, nevertheless, by an easy effort of the imagination, might be supposed to indicate a cloudless heaven and bright prospect, when once out of the surrounding gloom. But scarcely had this idea taken omen-like possession of her thoughts, than it was scared away by a sudden quivering of the foliage around her and the low moaning sound of wind sweeping through the trees. These well known harbingers of a thunder-storm, which the heat of the weather had made more than probable, caused Cyrilla instantly to stop, and deliberate what she should do ; for, although she had no weak fears of lightning, and did not shudder at the sound of thunder, a wood was not exactly the place in which she chose to remain during the storm's continuance. Considering the way back much too long, she decided on endeavouring to reach the nearest opening to the lake, where Rupert had desired a boat to be placed every morning. There might be time to cross at least to the island, and perhaps even to reach the cottage, before the rain commenced.

She began to run along a lately discovered short cut through the trees, lightly springing over the protruding roots, when, on looking down a long glade to catch a glimpse of the sky, she perceived the figure of a man coming quickly and stealthily towards her. Had he walked upright or made any sign of greeting, she might have supposed him a wood-ranger or one of Rupert's workmen, and

rejoiced in his appearance ; but there was something in the crouching gait of the man, as he skulked behind the trees, that marked him at once as a trespasser, if not something worse. An indefinite sensation of fear began to oppress her, and she hurried on towards the lake, the sound of following footsteps only increasing her speed, until close at her ear she heard the hoarse whisper—" Stop, ma'am, if you please, and tell me if this road leads to any public-house where a poor traveller could pass the night?"

Cyrilla stopped, and endeavoured to explain that the road which he had left would bring him to the forester's house ; but that before him there was only the lake or the moorlands, which were dangerous to pass without a guide.

There was something fearfully repulsive in the appearance of the man, as he stood before her, leaning on a stout walking-stick, and scowling at her from under his black bushy eyebrows. The growth of several days' beard was on his face, his hair was matted, and his cheeks sunken ; the clothes which covered his thick-set figure seemed not to have been made for him, and were soiled and torn in many places ; and he flattened his old blue cloth cap over his right ear with a mixture of negligence and impertinence, even while she spoke to him.

" Is there any one on the lake?" he asked abruptly, when she ceased.

" I don't know," she replied, moving quickly on.

"I'm in great distress, ma'am, and would be obliged to you for any trifle you may have about you."

"I'm very sorry," began Cyrilla, breathing quickly, "but.....I have no money with me....."

"Your watch, ma'am, with the chain, may be worth something."

Without a moment's hesitation she handed it to him.

Having deposited it in his waistcoat-pocket, he walked on beside her, swinging his stick in the air at every step, and apparently enjoying her terror, which, notwithstanding all her endeavours, was becoming but too evident.

"We're likely to have a thunder-storm, ma'am, and that will chase the boats off the lake, I'm thinking."

"Perhaps so," said Cyrilla, beginning again to run on.

"Stop, young woman; you had better answer me civilly," he cried, pursuing her. "I want to know if I can find a boat hereabouts—I'm thinking if you didn't know there was one a-waiting for you at the lake, you wouldn't run there so fast."

He made a grasp at her arm as he spoke; but, with a sort of desperation, Cyrilla dashed off his hand, and bounded forward with a velocity that nothing but mortal fear could give. A faint hope of gaining the boat, and having time to push out into the lake, supported her until she heard the low muttered curses of the pursuer again close be-

hind her ; but on reaching the opening to the lake, her limbs began to falter, her heart seemed to rise to her throat, deep horror to impede respiration, the ground beneath her to heave, when—stretched at full length on the well-known wooden bench, she beheld—Zorndorff.

He started to his feet as, with a scream of wild exultation at her deliverance, she sprang towards him ; but the revulsion of feeling was too strong, and she was scarcely in a state of consciousness as she convulsively pressed her face to his shoulder, and gasped out—" Save me, Edouard—save me !"

Before he had time to express astonishment, or ask for explanation, the revolting figure of the traveller explained all. With a scarcely perceptible motion, Zorndorff put his hand behind him, and taking up his cane, pressed a spring, and in a moment a long sharp sword was at his service.

" Who are you, and what do you want ?" he asked, calmly.

The man was at first too much confounded to answer—at length he stammered something about having lost his way, and seeking some village or inn where he could rest ; but while speaking, he eyed the boat so wistfully that Zorndorff could not help suspecting he wished to appropriate it to his immediate use, and consequently moved nearer to him as he answered, " Men do not expect to find inns or villages in enclosed grounds. Were I a gendarme I should inspect your papers—not being

one, I bid you begone with all convenient despatch. You have given me more time than is necessary to note your face and figure."

The ruffian grasped his stick firmly, raised it for a moment menacingly; but the more dangerous weapon, perhaps also the steady eye and posture of his antagonist, deterred him from commencing hostilities, and he slunk away into the wood, stopping occasionally to look back, and vent his impotent rage in imprecations, accompanied by distortions of countenance that produced a disgusting resemblance to the canine species.

Cyrilla, who had latterly been standing at a little distance, a trembling spectator of this scene, watched him anxiously until he was quite out of sight, and then sat down on the bench, and began to breathe freely; but with returning thought and composure she felt the most poignant grief at what had occurred—the bitterest vexation at her want of presence of mind. Why had she sought refuge with Zorn-dorff? Would not his presence alone have been sufficient protection? Why had she not sprung into the boat, and secured at once a retreat for herself and for him, had it been necessary? Had Rupert, or even Lindesmar, a woodranger, or the old fisherman been on the spot, she would have embraced any of them in the same manner, and..... laughed at it afterwards; but Zorndorff was not likely to suppose that terror alone had dictated her movements.....and how differently had she intended

to have met him! What would he think of her now? and, in painful uncertainty, she looked up—caught his eye, and felt herself blush intensely.

“ I must go,” she cried, starting from her seat, and quickly descending the bank towards the boat. “ We are likely to have a thunder-storm, and.....”

“ And torrents of rain,” said Zorndorff, as a wild gust of wind swept along the lake, giving it the leaden colour of the sky above it. “ In such weather,” he added, stepping into the boat after her, and taking up the oars, “ I cannot let you go alone. You had better steer for the island, and wait in the cottage until the first burst of the storm is over.”

Cyrilla, who had no sort of inclination for a *tête-à-tête* with him, shook her head, said she did not mind the rain, and preferred going home. Without further remonstrance Zorndorff obeyed, endeavouring as much as possible to steady the small sharply-built boat, but too evidently intended for fair and not at all adapted to foul weather. The waves ran tolerably high for a small lake; and Cyrilla, steering with the most feminine uncertainty and carelessness, dividing her attention pretty equally between the rudder and her garden hat, more than once placed them within an inch of capsizing.

“ Steady, Cyrilla, and steer for the boat-house,” cried Zorndorff, at last; “ it must be just opposite to you now!”

"I can scarcely see it at all since the rain began," she answered; "but perhaps you will steer and let me row for a little while, until you have rested—you seem very tired."

"No," said Zorndorff, holding both oars with one hand, while with the other he loosened his cravat, and took a long gasping kind of breath; "I am not at all tired, but I have lately been suffering occasionally from difficulty of breathing—fits of suffocation, which are very disagreeable."

"I did not know.....I was not aware.....I mean I never heard of your having been ill."

"Of course not," he rejoined, beginning to row with increased energy; "how could you, after having forbidden Melanie to mention my name in your presence?"

"Have you consulted any one?" asked Cyrilla, without noticing his last words. "Have you had advice?"

"Yes; but I don't mean to follow it.....in fact, I cannot, for the violent exercise I have been told to avoid has lately become absolutely necessary to calm the intolerable restlessness that torments me—a restlessness produced by mental excitement of no common kind, and of which I can at present foresee no termination."

Cyrilla was silent: she did not choose to be drawn into premature explanations; and indeed the gusts of wind and torrents of rain soon made all conversation impossible. Both as they stepped

ashore were as completely wet as if they had been immersed in the lake, and both looked and felt inexpressibly miserable. The influence that the mind exercises over the body could scarcely be more fully exemplified than on this occasion: there is little doubt that had Rupert been Cyrilla's companion, the boat-house would have echoed with merry laughter, and a quick walk up the avenue would have prevented the violent fit of shivering which befell her as she murmured some measured words of thanks, while Zorndorff fastened the half-swamped boat to one of the posts.

Irritated by her manner, but not wishing her to perceive that such was the case, he repeated the word "thanks," and then looking up, asked "for what?"

Cyrilla turned away, and neither of them knowing how to continue a conversation so unpropitiously commenced, a painful silence ensued. Directly they came within view of the windows of the house, servants hurried towards them with umbrellas, and at the hall-door they were met by the President and Melanie. The latter exclaimed eagerly, "O, dear Cyrilla, we have been in such a state of alarm about you! When Rupert heard that you had gone out alone, he was quite frantic—went off directly to look for you, and even took some gendarmes who happened to be here with him! He is actually much more afraid of a thunder-storm than I am, and....."

“He never thought about the storm or rain either,” said the President, interrupting her. “The fact is, Melanie, we did not choose to alarm you and Madame de Rubigny by letting you know that those very gendarmes brought the intelligence that a criminal, who escaped the day before yesterday from Exfort jail, has been traced to Freilands Park, and was in all probability prowling about the grounds.”

“What an escape!” cried Melanie; “how she might have been frightened had she met him!”

“I *have* been frightened,” said Cyrilla; and then she related in a few words what had happened, and afterwards gave a servant a short note to Rupert, hastily written in pencil, to tell him that she had reached home in safety by the lake.

“And now, Melanie,” said the President, “you must in Rupert’s name invite Edouard to remain here.”

Zorndorff, after a glance towards Cyrilla, declined the invitation which his aunt rather hesitatingly proffered. “He should be obliged to return home to dress—could not be back in time for dinner—was not yet equal to the gaiety of Freilands.....”

“Pshaw!” cried the President; “the sooner you get over that last idea the better—we miss you, and want to have you with us again. I know Rupert will be greatly annoyed to find that you preferred going home, to dry clothes, a good dinner, and pleasant company here.”

Zorndorff seemed to waver—one word, one look from Cyrilla would have been sufficient to retain him ; but with an almost imperceptible inclination of her head, she passed on into the hall, and thence to her room. Scarcely, however, had she begun to disencumber herself of her wet garments, when a tramping of feet and confused noise of many voices reached her ear. The sounds were too unusual in such a well appointed household not to attract immediate attention, and even to cause some anxiety. She rang her bell for the second time with some impatience, and at length her maid appeared, and began with great volubility to relate that Count Zorndorff had been taking leave quite quietly of his excellency the Herr President, when suddenly his mouth filled with blood, and when he put up his hand, it gushed out over his arm ; that he had refused to enter the house, and said it was of no consequence, but afterwards had fallen down quite like dead. She had not heard Mademoiselle ring twice, for she had just stepped into the hall to hear what had happened ; and there was the Count lying on the floor as pale as death, and blood still flowing from his mouth, but not so much as at first, they said ; and the Countess Falkenstein was kneeling beside him, and his Excellency walking up and down giving orders, and.....”

Cyrilla ran past her into the hall, and looked on with a strange confusion of thoughts, while Zorndorff was being carried to a room at the other end

of the house. As she slowly followed and saw him lying with closed eyes, his face colourless, his hands and clothes covered with blood, the idea that he was—her husband—presented itself with a distinctness that was intolerably painful. The being she had once loved, and now dreaded beyond all others, was prostrated helpless, perhaps dying, before her, and she dared not show even the common interest which she might be supposed to feel for her sister's nephew!

The most profound silence reigned in the room after the servants had withdrawn, and Cyrilla stood for some minutes in distressing perplexity before she summoned courage to approach Melanie, and say, in a whisper: "Do you think that the exertion of rowing could have caused this frightful illness?"

"I do not know," she answered; "perhaps not, as he has been ill for some time, and....."

"And," said the President, somewhat sternly, "and doing everything that he knew was likely to injure his health. One would really suppose he had some object to attain in being dangerously ill!"

This speech seemed to irritate Zorndorff in a remarkable manner. With sudden violence he turned round, raised himself on his elbow, opened his eyes widely, and endeavoured to speak; but the words were choked in blood, and he sank back with an impatient moan.

“I am sure,” said Cyrilla, compassionately, “no one would wish to be in this state if they could help it; however, I trust there is no danger to be apprehended, for I remember hearing that my father once burst a blood-vessel without in any way injuring his lungs.”

While speaking, she had unconsciously approached the sofa, and Zorndorff, taking her hand, endeavoured to draw her nearer, when he gazed earnestly in her face. The President looked from one to the other rather inquisitively, and walked to the window; but when Melanie, hoping that the moment of reconciliation she had so long desired had at length arrived, was advancing to whisper words of peace and forgiveness, they heard a well-known quick step approaching the door, and a moment after Rupert, wet and much bespattered with mud, entered the room.

“I was sorry to hear of your sudden illness, Zorndorff,” he said, going up to him; “very sorry indeed. It would have been pleasanter had you turned into your old quarters of your own accord, and not been so disagreeably compelled to occupy them. However, Melanie will take good care of you, and I have sent to Exfort to your man, what’s his name, and desired him to come out here, and bring whatever you may want for the next week or two. In the mean time, if you will allow Ehrhardt to supply you from my wardrobe.....”

Zorndorff, who was excessively vexed at what he

considered a most untoward interruption, made no effort to speak ; but, signing to Melanie to answer for him, closed his eyes again.

“My dear Rupert,” she said, somewhat petulantly, “he cannot speak—dare not even move how very little you know of illness !”

“That’s true,” said Rupert ; “but I have written to our assistant surgeon to come and spend the night here, and you will allow that that was a good idea.”

“Excellent,” said the President ; “for Melanie, notwithstanding her reproaches to you, is as ignorant as any of us what to do ; but I hope Dr Reiner will be here in a short time now ;” and he carefully inspected his watch, and began to compute the time necessary for a messenger to go to and return from Exfort.

Cyrilla, who had gladly made her escape into the hall, was soon followed by Rupert, who exclaimed : “You have led me a pretty dance to-day, Cyrilla ; I prefer in future your sitting under the oak tree with Lindesmar, or whoever you please. Seriously, had you not written with your own hand that you had met Zorndorff, and returned by the lake with him, I should still be striding through the wood in a state of distraction. The note arrived just as one of the gendarmes brought me your watch and chain, which had been found on the person of that daring villain. The very idea of your being even, for a moment in the power of a robber

and murderer just escaped from jail is too horrible."

"He terrified me beyond measure," said Cyrilla, with a shudder at the mere recollection; "but I have almost forgotten my fright in subsequent annoyance;" and, relating her meeting with Zorndorff, she bitterly regretted having so completely lost all presence of mind.

Rupert laughed, and assured her that Zorndorff knew too much of her sex to attach the slightest importance to any such demonstrations of regard when prompted by terror.

"I am afraid you are mistaken," she said, reluctantly.

"Not a bit of it," said Rupert; "I never in my life was so embraced as by a young girl who took refuge with me from the growls of a cross old Newfoundland dog. She thanked me, too, with floods of tears for my protection; but when I chanced to see her a few days afterwards, she had not the slightest recollection of me!"

"O, I can understand that perfectly," said Cyrilla; "and if by any good chance I had found a stranger at the lake to-day, I should have got over my embarrassment with a few words of apology... But Count Zorndorff has the unfortunate idea that I still like him, and I hoped to have convinced him by my manner and not by words that such was no longer the case."

"There is no use in thinking about it, at all

events," said Rupert; "and you have plenty of time to commence a new line of operations, as he will scarcely leave us for two or three weeks."

"You do not seem to apprehend any danger," observed Cyrilla.

"Not much; I remember his having an attack of precisely the same nature ten years ago, just after an unpleasant affair with a student of the name of Maier. His natural inclinations are rather indolent, and his habits luxurious in an unusual degree; but when suffering from any kind of anxiety or perplexity, he suddenly commences taking the most violent exercise, hoping, perhaps, that fatigue of body may blunt the sense of mental uneasiness. The change, however, is too sudden, and generally injures his health in some way or other. His being here will not, I hope, be very disagreeable to you; Melanie can take care of him, and Julie de Lindesmar devote herself to his amusement, so that we shall in fact have nothing to do with him; and at all events you know the President was determined to have him here next week. But I see you are shivering in your wet dress, and will not detain you any longer."

CHAPTER VI.

FOR some days Zorndorff was completely confined to his room, and though immediately pronounced out of danger, extreme tranquillity was necessary for his recovery. His first excursions were confined to the dining and breakfast rooms, which were on the ground-floor and near his apartment; and, tired of his solitude, perhaps also mindful of Cyrilla's matutinal habits, he one morning appeared in the breakfast-room at an unusually early hour, found her as he had expected, but, standing with her at the open window, were two children, a boy and girl of about ten and eleven years old, of whose arrival he had heard during his illness, and about whose names there had been some jesting in his room. They were Rupert's godchildren, Rupert and Rupertina; and, to prevent confusion, it had been found necessary to adopt the nursery diminutive for the boy, and call him Pertl, while the two first syllables of his sister's name being dispensed with altogether, she was by universal consent called Tina.

Pertl and Tina were two clear-eyed, red-cheeked honest-looking children, not at all calculated to interest Zorndorff, who indeed scarcely bestowed a glance on them, but deliberately fixed his eyes on a very young man who sat alone at the breakfast-table, devouring rolls and coffee with a velocity perfectly inconceivable to Zorndorff, who, even in his student days, had been a most deliberate and delicate eater. Now, this young man, though a stranger to him, was evidently very much at home at Freilands, and, in fact, he had been some weeks there; but, as he spent his days chiefly with the gamekeeper, and his evenings in looking over books of engravings, his advent has been hitherto unnoticed. Dark-haired, dark-complexioned, and heavy-featured, with a figure short, broad-shouldered, and muscular, his appearance would have been decidedly vulgar, had it not been for an indescribable ease of manner that more than concealed the clumsiness of his proportions, and the slight degree of bashfulness incident to his years. He finished his breakfast apparently undisturbed by Zorndorff's presence and observant eyes, rose, slung his pouch over his perfectly well appointed shooting dress, fumbled in one of his numerous pockets for a dog-call, selected a cigar from a very ample case, and nodding familiarly to Cyrilla and the children, was about to leave the room when Rupert entered.

"Why, Conrad," he said, with some surprise, "you are getting later and later every day, it

seems. Have you and Cyrilla been talking again about that object of your mutual dislike, our aunt in Salzburg? Zorndorff, I am glad to see you are able to breakfast with us. Allow me to introduce my cousin Walden to you, my heir-apparent, as I am his, should we decide on leading a life of celibacy. We are," he continued laughingly, placing his arm on his cousin's shoulder, "we are an interesting pair; at least, Melanie says so in some very pretty lines which she wrote the other day about our being the only sons of our parents, the last of our respective lines, alike holding fiefs which return to the crown should we die unmarried; and having every right, in that case, to the melancholy sepulchral distinction of reversed arms upon our tombstones! Do you remember, Conrad, how annoyed she was at my saying that I considered a reversed torch infinitely more significant?"

"I was not aware of the singular similarity of your positions," said Zorndorff, "or that the Waldens of Waldenburg were also reduced to one representative."

"That is what makes us interesting," said Rupert: "if it were not for that, the reversed arms, and Melanie's poem about us, we are a couple of as common-place fellows as could be found on a fine summer's morning like this. By the by, Conrad, you need not expect to find me either on the moors or at the marsh to-day. I shall scarcely get beyond the music-room, as the day after to-morrow

our opera is to be performed before a tolerably numerous audience, and I don't choose to disgrace myself. In case you are disposed to be civil, you may come back at one o'clock to serve as walking-stick to Cyrilla."

"May I?" asked the young man, turning eagerly back, and standing with the half open door in his hands—"May I?"

"Yes," answered Cyrilla, smiling; "but I choose to have you without either gun or dog, meerschaum or cigar."

"She is kindly endeavouring to civilize you," cried Rupert, laughing; "and if any one can make you get over your dread of womankind, it will be Cyrilla. You are not afraid of her now, are you?"

"Afraid of me!" repeated Cyrilla, shaking her head incredulously; "O no, it is my fate to fear others, but never to be feared myself."

"You are liked all the better for that, I suspect," said Rupert; "at least, I can answer for my own sex. Gentleness and timidity in women are as much admired by us, as strength and courage on our side are esteemed by you."

"Perhaps so," she rejoined; "but I would willingly dispense with your admiration, for the comfort and advantage of having a little more courage."

"I wish," said Rupert, in a low voice, as he leaned out of the window with her, "I wish you had courage to free yourself from the trammels of

—that man, who is undoubtedly watching us just now.”

“Don’t speak of him, dear Rupert,” she answered with a look of alarm.

“Only let me ask you one question,” he continued, in a whisper; “when you forbid my interference in this matter, were you wholly influenced by fears of the consequences to yourself?”

“O no,” she answered quickly; “there were many other considerations quite strong enough to impose silence on me. The happiness, and even safety, of those I most love, might become endangered, and”

“Ah,” cried Rupert, interrupting her; “that is what I have long wished to ascertain—what I have suspected from your determination not to consult me on this occasion. You dread, perhaps, a quarrel between Zorndorff and me. Let me assure you that all such fears are needless. I am no duellist—abhor the custom, and have never been drawn into anything of the kind in my life; but even were it otherwise, Zorndorff is not likely to imagine that the way to obtain your pardon or regain your affection is by taking the life of your nearest relation! Believe me, no provocation will ever induce him to do anything likely to place an insurmountable obstacle to the fulfilment of this confounded engagement.”

Cyrilla felt how just this reasoning was, how

applicable, had the case been precisely as she had represented it to him ; but Zorndorff was more at liberty than Rupert suspected, and she saw with regret that the latter, although he had hitherto faithfully kept his promise of non-intervention, was now but too evidently irritated by his rival's presence, and already began to chafe under the restraint imposed on him. Notwithstanding all his peaceful professions, and her knowledge of the wariness of Zorndorff's character, she dreaded too much her cousin's natural impetuosity of temper, shrunk from the burst of anger which would inevitably follow his hearing of the insult that had been offered to one of his family—remembered Melanie's not unfounded dread of the President's anger, shuddered at the idea of being in the end, perhaps, claimed by Zorndorff as his wife ; and came to the conclusion that but one line of conduct remained for her, that of formally resigning Rupert at once, without reserve and for ever. As these thoughts passed through her mind, she leaned still further out of the window, bending down her head, in the hope that the long ringlets might conceal her tearful eyes from him ; but she found it impossible to utter a word, until after a pause he added earnestly, " You understand me, Cyrilla ? "

" Perfectly. "

" I did not mean to distress you ; but I thought it just possible you might be embarrassed by un-

necessary anxiety on my account. Women sometimes have rather fantastical notions about such things."

The sound of people entering the room, and voices he did not expect to hear, made him half turn round; and he was about to leave the window, when Cyrilla regained his attention by saying hurriedly, "Rupert, this state of things cannot continue any longer; the indefinite engagement so generously renewed by you must end. I am now perfectly convinced of the impossibility of its continuance, and as I dare not tell you what you have a right to know....."

"I shall not ask you again," he said, interrupting her good-humouredly; "only let me assure you that my question was not prompted either by distrust or unjustifiable curiosity."

"Unjustifiable curiosity!" repeated Madame de Bellegarde, placing herself between them. "What on earth are you two talking about?"

"Unjustifiable curiosity," answered Rupert, laughing; "but what a famous idea this is of coming here to breakfast,—I wish you would do so every morning—Is Bellegarde with you?"

"Yes, and Julie. It was she who made us turn out so early."

Julie was already seated at the breakfast table beside Zorndorff, compelling him to talk about his illness; and then declaring repeatedly, and with jesting significance, that she thought "he looked remarkably well."

Virginie's little boy, the moment he entered the room, sprang towards Rupert; the other two children showed every inclination to get into his pockets, so very closely they drew their chairs to his,—all three equally intent on monopolizing his attention, while he was by the others supposed rather unreasonably to be able to bear a part in the conversation going on about him.

The President was an unsociable companion at breakfast; he eat slowly and at intervals, his eyes intently fixed on the pages of some newspaper, literary journal, or pamphlet; and when he spoke, his words were ever a continuation of the thoughts suggested by his reading. Unconscious or unheeding of the din of merry voices around him, he turned to Rupert and observed, "It seems after all, Rupert, that the latest discoveries in agricultural chemistry have raised very just doubts as to the success of any attempts at the cultivation of moorland such as yours."

"I thought," said Rupert, looking up, "that was your opinion also when you approved of my plan of progressive turf-cutting as a means of subsistence for my colonists."

"Why, yes—partly—the removal of the turf has been recommended, as it is too deficient in mineral elements for the growth of grain of any description; but since we have ascertained that your subsoil is composed of quartz, gravel, and....."

"O," cried Rupert, "it will be long enough before

we reach the subsoil, the average depth of bog is full forty feet! They say, however, that the marsh when drained promises better things. I heard yesterday that the upper lake can be reduced to a mere pond in a very few years. My dear boy," he continued in a low voice to Pertl, "the ponies are not mine; but if you ask my cousin Cyrilla to lend you one of them, I am sure she will have no objection."

"I am glad, however," observed Zorndorff, "that the antiquated notion of draining and planting has been abandoned."

"Not quite," said Rupert; "for, besides the correction of the river, there are to be canals for the turf-boats, and, wherever trees are likely to thrive, plantations also."

"Which will require a century to grow," rejoined Zorndorff; "to say nothing of the certain losses in the first instance from frosts."

Pertl slightly shook Rupert's arm to gain his attention, and whispered, "He said he could teach me to ride in a fortnight."

"Who?"

"Your own groom."

"I don't choose you to learn from my groom. You must ask the *Stallmeister* to take you with him when he rides out in the morning."

"But the *Herr Stallmeister* does not like children; he—he—calls us brats....."

"You said," whispered Tina, "that you would take me to the island to see the cow."

"If there were any chance hereafter of producing an artificial alluvion—" began the President.

"Scarcely to be thought of," said Rupert; "the river has very little fall, and carries no slime whatever."

"*Du sucre, du sucre!*" cried little Alphonse, seizing Rupert's mustachios, and pulling his head towards him."

"You little monkey!" he exclaimed, laughingly, strewing the contents of the nearest sugar basin on the table before him.

Virginie protested it would ruin the child's teeth; and while Rupert was playfully reminding her that she had judiciously quieted his screams the day before with chocolate bon bons, Mr de Bellegarde called out from the other end of the table: "I say, Adlerkron, excuse my curiosity, but I really should like to know what you are going to do with this famous bog of yours? Every one talks, but no one knows anything about it."

"And yet it is a very simple affair," said Rupert; "I have decided in favour of *Vehn* colonies, which have been found to answer so well in Friesland and Holland for more than two centuries."

"Never heard of them in all my life," observed Mr de Bellegarde.

"Nor I either," said Rupert, "until a sort of

personal interest—the hope of gain—and perhaps some other motives, made me inquire, read, and at last consult people learned in such matters.”

“Well, and these Vehn colonies are something very extraordinary, are they?”

“Not at all. A Vehn or Fen colony is neither more nor less than rows of colonists’ houses, built along a canal navigable for turf-boats. The sale of the turf must be made certain, the communication easy, drainage and irrigation directed by an overseer who understands his business, and a tract of land given to each colonist, with some advantages which it is not necessary to enumerate.”

“But I don’t exactly see how these colonies are likely to increase your wealth so enormously as people here suppose,” observed Mr de Bellegarde.

“Nor I either for the next ten or twenty years,” answered Rupert; “but it is very evident that, in the meantime, the sale of turf will prevent me from sustaining much loss—the people are employed, and.....”

“Ah.....altogether philanthropical!”

“Not quite,” said Rupert, colouring a good deal, as he rose from the breakfast table; “I have computed outlay and income with a good deal of accuracy; and if the matter in any way interest you, you can inspect the plans, estimates, and calculations at your leisure.”

“No, thank you. I know nothing whatever of business, and find it hard enough work turning my

French francs, when I have them, into German florins."

Madame de Bellegarde's ostensible motive for coming to Freilands that morning was to make inquiries about the *Pensionat* at Strasburg, to which she intended to send her daughter Hortense: her real one, however, was the knowledge that a music-room rehearsal of the opera was to take place, which would bring a crowd of gay people together; and, as she privately observed to her sister, "What was the use of moping at home, when one could find amusement elsewhere,"—to which Julie had unhesitatingly answered, "None whatever. You may be sure that Klemmhein will be there; and, I daresay, I shall have Zorndorff all to myself for an hour or two."

And she *had* him all to herself; for immediately after entering the large drawing-room, an almost complete dispersion of the party took place. The President went to Exfort, Rupert to his study, Mr de Bellegarde to smoke under the lime-trees, Cyrilla commenced drawing things most incongruous for the amusement of the children at a very distant window, and Madame de Bellegarde retired to the balcony with Melanie, to make the proposed inquiries about the "sound, extensive, and polite education, combined with the influences of family and home, under the ever-watchful eye of an anxious mother, &c. &c. &c.," to be procured on tolerably moderate terms at Strasburg.

They naturally spoke of "geography and the use of the globes," although they do not form so prominent a part in the printed systems of either French or German female education as in the "sound English" one. Madame de Bellegarde touched lightly on the subject of morals and manners, and then listened with suppressed yawns to Melanie's dissertation on religion, as the basis of all well-regulated education; the necessity also of exercising the reasoning faculty, forming the judgment, cultivating the imagination, and encouraging a general taste for literature, which would afford Hortense herself, and those about her, imperceptible but endless sources of interest and enjoyment!

"La! Melanie dear," cried Madame de Bellegarde, endeavouring with her very small hand to cover a mouth which, naturally large, assumed hideous proportions when distended to a yawn; "I should think all these things were included in the board and lodging, geography, and the use of the globes. Only washing and accomplishments are charged extra; you know Henri is quite satisfied with the terms, and intends Hortense to learn everything!"

This was conclusive, and Melanie spoke no more of Strasburg or Hortense, but pursued the subject she had been discussing, by explaining to her listless companion how perfectly she would have educated a daughter had she had one! It may be

doubted, whether Adrienne paid much attention to the description of the fancy education which had been destined for fancy's child—she seemed in an unusual degree occupied with the contemplation of the scenery, scarcely for a moment removing her lorgnette from her eye, excepting to rub it with an elaborately embroidered handkerchief, or for the purpose of stifling a succession of yawns, which, to Melanie's infinite amusement, she maintained proceeded altogether from nervousness.

"I do believe," she said at last, affecting a look of surprise, while every trace of weariness disappeared from both features and person—"I do believe there is Klemmhein riding up to the house, just as if he had anything to do with the rehearsal. I should like to know what brings you here to-day?" she added, throwing a shower of rose-leaves on him as he dismounted.

"I have come to play audience," he answered; "invited especially for the purpose, I assure you."

Soon after, the sound of carriages and the clattering of prancing horses became audible, and then various well-filled char-à-bancs, calèches, and phaetons, surrounded by horsemen, might be seen dashing forward towards the house, and pouring their gay-coloured contents on the lawn. If the rehearsal of the opera had been the main object of the meeting, it seemed strangely to be forgotten. Some stood together talking—some sat down under the trees—others walked up and down, where the shade

was deepest; and Rupert, Melanie, and Cyrilla's appearance among them, seemed so much to add to the loquacity and enjoyment of the assembly, and made it so attractive, that Zorndorff and Julie de Lindesmar were soon left quite alone in the immense apartment, with its deserted balcony. The latter, scarcely conscious of the little attention bestowed on her, rattled on in a manner that might have amused Zorndorff, had not his mind been long completely pre-occupied. With great irritation, he had perceived that Cyrilla, during two whole hours spent in his immediate vicinity, had totally ignored his presence, not as if she had been acting a part, or trying to exasperate him, but with the calm decision of a fixed purpose. Speculations about her probable motives had sufficed to preserve his tranquillity while she was present—directly she left the room he became impatient, and at last, raising himself with an expression of extreme languor, he observed, while walking across the room, "One must be ill, they say, in order to appreciate health as it deserves." Then stopping before Cyrilla's table, he began to examine the sketches, half pencil, half water-colours, which she had made at the desire of the children. They were fair specimens of drawings done "to order," in which not all the artist's technical talent could give an interest to weak and worthless designs.

"I am glad she has begun to draw again," observed Julie, taking up a portfolio that had escaped

Zorndorff's notice ; " perhaps, after all, she may be induced to finish the aquarelles for the album."

" What album ?"

" O, I thought you knew all about Melanie's lottery for the poor man who broke his arm while repairing the ceiling of one of her rooms ! Cyrilla compelled the President to take a score of tickets, and he actually won the crimson-bound album we had each individually set our hearts upon gaining. It was, however, in a fair way of remaining filled with pieces of *carte blanche*, had she not offered to furnish it with water-colour portraits of us all. They are, it is true, little more than sketches, but excellent likenesses ; and she got on with her usual rapidity until Margaret's death, when she seemed to lose all interest in everything. By the by, can you tell me why she was in such despair on that occasion ?"

" I was not at all aware....." began Zorndorff, with a look of unfeigned surprise ; and then he stopped and turned to his companion, as if he wished to hear more.

" O, they did not tell you of it, perhaps ; but it was odd, to say the least, as she never appeared to care for Margaret during her lifetime ; yet, when she died, her grief for her was deep and unfeigned—more so, I strongly suspect, than.....yours."

" Mademoiselle !"

" Don't be offended, my dear Zorndorff. Your conduct to your wife was unimpeachable—admi-

rable ; but as to wishing her to have lived, or regretting her now, you must be more or less than man if you can do either."

"And yet," said Zorndorff, bitterly, "I have done both, though you will not perhaps believe me."

"I think it quite possible that you *have done so*. The suddenness of her death, the cause, the shock, and all that sort of thing.....But surely you must all along have seen that she was dying ; and, if you consider the matter rationally, you ought rather to rejoice at her being spared a continuation of hopeless suffering."

Zorndorff did not answer, but he sat down and deliberately began to draw forth the contents of Cyrilla's portfolio.

Julie continued : "I can imagine your having a horror of unhealthy nervous women now, and hope sincerely that your second choice may be more fortunate."

"Thank you," he replied, dryly ; "but you can scarcely suppose that, after my painful experience, I am likely to think of such a thing."

"So my sister Virginie said when she first came from Italy ; and yet now....."

"O that is a mere revival of old feelings—quite natural."

"But most absurd," cried Julie.

"I cannot agree with you," said Zorndorff, calmly.

"Of course not, because you do not know what

is going on here. Why, it is the most evident thing possible, that Rupert and Cyrilla are engaged to each other months ago."

Zorndorff first examined the drawing in his hand, then looked up slowly, and said, "I think you are mistaken."

"It seems to you a matter of indifference," she observed, interrogatively.

Zorndorff did not choose to answer. He placed the drawing in a better light, and asked if the flowers round each portrait were emblematical?

"Most probably, as Cyrilla insists on choosing them herself."

"I suppose," he observed, "that I have no chance of a place among these portraits?"

"Not if it had depended on her, I suspect," answered Julie. "But the President, fearing that he might not get the portraits he most desired to possess, first proposed making a list in the order he wished to have them; and when Cyrilla would not consent to that arrangement, he wrote the names on slips of paper, folded them up, and made her promise to let little Alphonse draw them for her, like lottery tickets. Your name was the first; and, oddly enough, though she refused to ask you to sit to her, the likeness is perfect."

Zorndorff had no doubt that it was so. He remembered having seen her equally successful when his features were less likely to have been engraved on her memory.

“But Margaret’s picture is the best of all,” continued Julie. “She sat several times, and was greatly pleased with the flowers given her.....but perhaps you would rather not see it.”

Zorndorff held out his hand in silence, and then shaded his eyes from the keen inquisitive glance of his companion, while he contemplated the portrait of the features that were then mouldering in the grave.

Julie grew impatient at his silence and apparent forgetfulness of her presence. “Poor soul!” she exclaimed, endeavouring to take the drawing from him—“Poor soul! it was those painted water-lilies that induced her to order the beautiful wreaths from Paris for her last ball-dress. They were exceedingly becoming, too.....You remember them, of course?”

“But too well,” answered Zorndorff.

“Margaret certainly dressed magnificently,” said Julie, as if she were bestowing a high encomium; “exquisite taste and endless variety! You must have been immensely splendid in pin-money!”

To this speech Zorndorff deigned no answer; and she added, “Have you any curiosity to look at your own portrait?”

“None whatever; but a good deal to see the emblem flowers.”

“If you expect a collection of rare exotics, you will be disappointed. Cyrilla only paints wild-flowers and weeds, which I am not botanist enough

to admire. However, the garland that forms your frame is pretty enough, and peculiarly fantastic. I believe this woody-looking plant, with the reddish flowers, is called *bois gentil*?"

"It is Daphne."

"And this?"

"Rather hard to say," answered Zorndorff. "There are neither flowers nor berries, but the leaves make me suspect it to be Solanum."

"I hate Latin words. Tell me the common name, and perhaps I may know it."

"The common name is, 'Deadly Nightshade.'"

"La! how horrible! and yet it looks very nice, twisted round the leafless parts of the other; and, 'what's in a name?' as Juliet says on the balcony."

"True," said Zorndorff, rising. "Besides, this nightshade admits the hope that perhaps one of the most useful and excellent of plants may have been intended; but this third, with its baneful berries, can, as emblem, mean nothing less than....." he put down the drawing, and turned away from the table.

"Than what?" asked Julie, following him. "Is it a poisonous plant?"

"One of the most deadly in our German flora."

"Well, certainly that is not very flattering. But I am not surprised, as I have long perceived that she dislikes you."

"Indeed! and in what way was it made evident to you?"

“Why, she can never be induced to name you ; and, when others do so, there is a certain little haughty look about her head which proves to me that she has not forgotten that, three years ago, you.....you.....”

“What ?” he asked, with forced composure.

“Deserted her for a richer bride.”

Zorndorff was for a moment so confounded by this answer that Julie saw her advantage, and continued : “If you think that Cyrilla, or indeed any woman, is likely to pardon such an offence, you are mistaken. We can mourn over the want of fortune, resign ourselves to the despotic will of a non-consenting father ; but to be deliberately and wilfully forsaken for bank bills and bags of gold is too offensively prosaic ever to be forgiven. I am convinced that she not only dislikes, but has learned to hate you, by this time. Why, even my brother Victor’s hopes are better founded than yours.”

“Excuse me,” said Zorndorff ; “but I do not think I said anything about having hopes. You are combating a mere supposition.”

Julie looked confused ; but, quickly recovering her self-possession, she said, “I thought you asked me to tell you what I had observed.”

“Yes ; but your observations cannot properly extend to me. We have been too little together lately.”

“That is true. You have been shamefully neglected, and almost forgotten, by everybody !” said Julie.

"But not by *you*!" rejoined Zorndorff, looking up with a mock sentimental air, of which she was sufficiently conscious to answer jestingly:—

"No; but I must confess that I have not had much time to think of you either. Freilands is not a house for reminiscences."

"Rather the contrary," said Zorndorff; "so perhaps you have been occupying yourself with thoughts of the future, and.....that stout boy whose acquaintance I made in the breakfast-room this morning."

"What! Cousin Conrad? the savage!"

"And have you made no attempt to civilize him? It is worth consideration, I assure you, for I can give most satisfactory accounts of his possessions in flocks, and herds, and lands, and fine old castles. You can make him anything you please, excepting, perhaps, loquacious. Can he talk at all?"

"They say he can.....to Cyrilla."

"O, indeed!" said Zorndorff, walking into the balcony, and then apparently becoming so interested in the moving figures beneath, that he did not perceive his companion's shrug of the shoulders as she turned away and left him to his meditations. A few minutes afterwards, however, a scarcely perceptible step instantly attracted his attention—he turned round, and on seeing Virginie, advanced towards her and whispered eagerly; "At last! Have you anything to tell me?"

"More than you will like to hear, I greatly fear," she answered gravely.

"Let me know it at once. The purport of your words may be of use to me; but your sister has been torturing me, to the best of her ability, for the last hour, and for no possible reason that I can discover."

"Perhaps she has observed what I have heard," said Virginie.

"I hope not," rejoined Zorndorff; "but let me hear all you have to say, and quickly, before these people come up stairs to make the noise they call music."

"I have spoken to Rupert," said Virginie, and a deep flush passed across her dark features at the recollection of the interview to which she alluded, "and—he—told me—that until Cyrilla actually consented to marry you—he would not believe that all chance were lost for him!"

"Indeed!" said Zorndorff, contracting his brows; "that does not sound well. Adlerkron is no coxcomb, and would not have said even that, vague as it is, without....."

"Without," said Virginie, harshly, "without being pretty sure that she was not unfavourably disposed towards him. I have no doubt that this is the case, and should say that you had little reason to hope, if you had not told me of her promise to you. Can you not insist on the fulfilment of it as soon as decency will permit?"

"No," answered Zorndorff, thoughtfully; "I do not wish to proceed to extremities."

"But are you sure she will consider it so very binding?" asked Virginie.

"On that subject I have no doubts," he answered.

"Then persist in your claim courageously—she is very timid, and will yield to necessity. Let it be your care hereafter to prevent her from regretting her compliance."

"Your advice is pleasant," said Zorndorff, "but I dare not follow it."

"And why not?"

"Your sister tells me that Cyrilla already hates me. What prospect of happiness would there be in such a case for either of us?"

"Ah, bah!.....you don't believe that she hates you."

"Why, no. I flatter myself that she is only angry, but with so much right, that I should be sorry to give her further cause of displeasure."

"She cannot be seriously displeased—women pardon so easily all that undoubtedly proceeds from excess of admiration and love."

"But Cyrilla is so much accustomed to be admired and loved," rejoined Zorndorff, with a sigh, "that she scarcely thanks people for a homage they cannot help paying to her charming person, and still more charming manners!"

"So you intend to resign her without even a struggle?"

“Never!” cried Zorndorff, vehemently, “never but with life!”

“I do not understand you,” said Virginie with affected coldness: “you are not sufficiently explicit for me to be of use to you; so I think we had better dissolve our partnership.”

“By no means,” cried Zorndorff; “we can still be of the most essential service to each other, but our efforts ought henceforward to be directed towards Adlerkron—he must resign Cyrilla.”

“He will not,” said Virginie, despondingly.

“He *must*!” cried Zorndorff. “I wish,” he added, after a moment’s consideration, “I wish I had allowed you to mention this promise to him, if you considered it necessary.”

“I did speak of it,” said Virginie, “and discovered at once that he knew all about it.”

“You do not mean to say that Cyrilla has told him?” cried Zorndorff, starting up and exhibiting a degree of anxiety and emotion that astonished his companion.

“If she have,” answered Virginie, “I am convinced it was on condition of inviolable secrecy on his part.”

“No conditions would bind him under such circumstances,” said Zorndorff; “her confession once made.....all is lost!”

“Confession!” repeated Virginie, with so much intense curiosity legible in her features, that Zorn-

dorff made an effort to conceal his uneasiness, and sat down beside her with forced calmness.

"Were she to confess the exact purport of the promise," he said, after a pause, "Adlerkron would consider it little less than an insult offered to his family."

"And," said Virginie, sarcastically—"and might demand what is called satisfaction? Rest assured, if there be but the shadow of a danger of that kind, Cyrilla will never betray you."

"You do not understand me," cried Zorndorff, impatiently, "my life is in far less danger than my honour, and all I hold most dear on earth."

"Will you trust me? Can I in any way be of use to you?" she asked, in a low insinuating voice.

"N-o," he answered, moodily, "I will leave my fate in Cyrilla's hands."

"I should rather suppose hers was in yours," observed Virginie.

"It would be if she resembled you," he replied; "but I have discovered that the *word* love will not induce her, like the most of your sex, to submit to tyranny in all its various forms."

"Asserting one's rights is not tyranny," retorted Virginie. "You say she is engaged to you; but if you expect her hereafter to be your wife, you are very wrong to leave her so long unclaimed, the object of adulation to three or four men, any one of

whom might be feared as a rival by a much vainer man than you."

She left the balcony, unheeded by Zorndorff, whose eyes followed Cyrilla, as she sauntered towards the lake with the two children and Conrad of Waldenburg.

CHAPTER VII.

A PLEASANT excitement and cheerful commotion pervaded the household of Freilands during the whole of the day preceding the representation of the opera, which had latterly, with its scenery, dresses, and music, occupied almost exclusively the thoughts of its inhabitants and their immediate friends. It was the *Matrimonio Segreto* of Cimarosa, an opera that possesses the immense advantage for amateurs of requiring but six performers and no change of scene—one gorgeously furnished saloon of the rich merchant Geronimo, with its five doors, being sufficient for all the purposes of the slight intrigue, which is altogether based on the fact of the merchant's younger daughter, Carolina, having advisedly or unadvisedly privately married her father's head clerk, and being in consequence placed in rather a perplexing position, when a Count Robisone, who comes to the house as suitor to her elder sister, inconsiderately prefers her, creates endless confusion, and provokes the jealousy of the sister, in a manner calculated to

try and exhibit that young lady's temper more amusingly than advantageously. All of course ends satisfactorily. Papa forgives the *Matrimonio Segreto*; the Count, with a magnanimity little practised in real life, immediately offers his hand to the turbulent sister; father and widowed aunt embrace and bless promiscuously; and a sextette, with elaborate triplet passages, forms the conclusion. The becoming costumes, with powder, patches, and paint, embroidered coats, swords, and silk stockings, enhance the charm of every playful movement, heighten the effect of every ludicrous scene, and, pleasing the eye, unconsciously prepare the ear to receive eagerly those tones which the Emperor Leopold requested to hear twice in one day—perhaps the only instance on record of an *encored opera*.

Much to the President's annoyance, Melanie and Rupert took it into their heads that the company invited should appear in the same costume as the players. It was in vain his Excellency had grumbled and muttered about "silly fancies, provoking whims, unreasonable vanity of women, who only wanted an opportunity to exhibit all their laces and jewels at once, &c., &c." The idea was carried into execution, and on the evening appointed the guests poured into the rooms, without exception, according to "order," for the "request" in the invitation was little else, it being well known that even Zorndorff's entreaty to be exempted from the mummery, as he was in mourning, and only intended to

join them for a short time, had been unheeded. Unwillingly enough, he had complied with the requisition ; but his wish to see and be near, perhaps also to watch, Cyrilla for a couple of hours, overcame his repugnance, and he appeared in what may have been the mourning of those times, which, serving to make him even more distinguished looking than usual, he was universally allowed to be the handsomest man present.

That Cyrilla would look well, no one had doubted ; that the dress would be unusually advantageous to her slight figure, had been expected ; but that her appearance should be so unusually brilliant, caused some surprise, and much speculative conversation.

“ It is the fairness of her complexion,” said one.

“ Rather the delicacy of her features,” suggested another.

“ No such thing : it is merely the choice of colours, and the quantity of lace. Nothing so becoming as lace for old or young.”

“ Well, Klemmhein, what do you think of her to-night ?” asked Lindesmar, half triumphantly.

“ She is lovely—but that sort of dress makes them all look well.”

“ Cannot agree with you,” rejoined Lindesmar ; “ some look vulgar ; and some put me provokingly in mind of Hogarth’s pictures.”

“ Not surely the Countess Falkenstein !” said Klemmhein, half interrogatively, as he followed the direction of Lindesmar’s eyes.

“O no, she always looks like a goddess. Erato even in rococo! By the by, if we keep near her when we go to the theatre, she has promised us places in the stage-box.”

The rooms had filled, and the various dancing engagements were being “booked,” with all the business-like precision of a German ball, when the summons to the theatre took place; and then the gay crowd ascended the stairs in procession, filling the numerous benches and galleries in a few minutes. Zorndorff quietly established himself behind Cyrilla’s chair, making no effort to attract her attention, which Lindesmar seemed disposed to monopolize altogether: she was not even aware of his vicinity until Madame de Bellegarde, between the acts, turning to him, observed: “The first cast of the opera was infinitely better—Cyrilla ought to have played the part of Carolina.”

“I think,” he answered, evasively, “the Viscountess is surpassing herself to-night; she is evidently playing *con amore*.”

“Rather too much so,” said Klemmhein, in a whisper only audible to Zorndorff and Cyrilla, “one might really fancy her Adlerkron’s wife. I had no idea she was so strong in the *tendre* line.”

“Virginie would have played the other sister better,” continued Madame de Bellegarde; “figure, face, voice, every thing would have answered, but she and Rupert chose to be together, and opposition was useless.”

“ I think,” said Melanie, “ we may be quite satisfied with Julie’s acting of the part, and with her singing too.”

“ O, as far as acting goes,” said Madame de Bellegarde, “ we have all talent enough ; but Julie is not a good musician, and has had an infinity of trouble in learning her part. Do look at Rupert peeping out from behind the curtain, and making faces at us ! I dare say they are uncommonly merry in their green-room, as they call it ; and I must say it was very arbitrary of the President to forbid visitors between the acts.”

“ I think he was right,” observed Zorndorff ; “ for one half of the audience would have considered themselves privileged to go there ; the other would have been offended if not invited ; and great confusion and delays innumerable would have been the consequence.”

“ Julie told me,” said Madame de Bellegarde, “ that they amuse themselves keeping up their characters behind the scenes, composing recitative of the most ludicrous kind ; and that Rupert and Virginie are infinitely more entertaining there than on the stage !”

“ I can easily imagine that,” said Lindesmar ; “ for it strikes me that a private marriage, either on or off the stage, is usually more a sentimental than a comical affair ; and so Virginie and even Rupert seem to consider it.”

“ Yet, it is a capital subject for a comedy,” observed Klemmhein.

“ But has been used just as often for tragedy,” rejoined Lindesmar. “ Nevertheless, there is something attractive in the position, and I shouldn’t at all mind playing first lover myself.”

“ On or off the stage?” asked Klemmhein, laughing.

“ Off—if I could find any one willing to take me, without waiting for this confounded place at the Exchequer, which my grandfather makes a *sine qua non*. I can imagine nothing more delightful than the interesting difficulties and mysteries of such a connexion; not to mention the glorious certainty of unbounded devotion that would be mine! A woman, who, in this land of legal formalities, consents to a private marriage, gives undoubtedly the most prodigious proof of unlimited confidence that.....”

“ She gives,” cried his sister, interrupting him; “ the most prodigious proof of unlimited folly of which she can be guilty. What settlements could she ever hope to obtain in such a case.”

Zorndorff, with contracted brows, and a gesture of impatience, moved his chair towards Melanie’s; and Lindesmar no sooner perceived him speaking to her, than, under pretence of examining Cyrilla’s fan, he leaned forward, and in the lowest possible whisper, poured forth a voluble speech, the purport of which Zorndorff in vain endeavoured to catch.

The answer, however, was laconic and audible; it was the one word, "Nonsense," which seemed rather to amuse than annoy him; and he continued to talk on in precisely the same manner, while Cyrilla deliberately levelled her opera-glass successively along the rows of spectators, not for one moment turning round until the curtain again rose.

The opera ended. Unbounded applause followed; and immediately afterwards the theatre began to empty as rapidly as it had filled. Zorndorff was the last to move: as he did so, he perceived that Cyrilla, in her haste to pass him with the others, had forgotten her fan—he had scarcely raised it from the chair when Lindesmar came back quite breathless,—

"Oh, you've found it, have you?"

"Yes."

"Well, give it to me, like a good fellow—it can be of no possible use to you."

"Or to you either, I should suppose," said Zorndorff, haughtily, as he passed him.

"Come, don't pretend to misunderstand me, Zorndorff; I make no secret of my devotion to Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron; and you see....."

"I saw quite enough," said Zorndorff, sarcastically, "to make me suspect that she does not care much either for you or your devotion."

"Of that you must allow me to be the best judge," retorted Lindesmar; "she has now sent me here for that fan, which she greatly values, as it is a

present from the President ; and, without vanity, I may say she would prefer having it brought to her by me rather than by you."

" We shall try that," said Zorndorff. " Tell her I have got it, and will either give it to herself or to you, whichever she may desire."

Lindesmar seemed to consider the matter not worth further discussion, and ran down the stairs. Zorndorff was still absently playing with the costly toy when he was joined by the joyous and self-satisfied actors and actresses, on their way to the drawing-room. As they entered, Julie turned to him, and said, " I hope, for once in your life, Count Zorndorff, you admired me to-night? Did my performance meet your approbation?"

" It was perfect—only equalled by....." he looked significantly towards Virginie, who smiled, and then moved on to receive the adulation showered upon her for her really faultless performance.

" Count Zorndorff," said Cyrilla, as she passed him on her way to Rupert, " I hear you have found my fan, may I beg....."

He held it towards her, but every effort to catch her eye was fruitless. She evidently was determined to attach no importance to the trifling circumstance, and received it much as she would have done had it been brought her by a groom of the chambers. Zorndorff, not a little mortified, but unwilling that she should perceive it, leaned over the back of a chair that was near the *causcuse* on

which she and Rupert sat down, and listened attentively to their conversation, while his eyes wandered apathetically to the other end of the room.

"I hope, Rupert," Cyrilla began, unfastening her ball-book from the fan she had just regained, and placing the tiny page before him, "I hope you have not made any engagements, for I have relied on you for our usual dances, and refused to give them to any one else."

"That is provoking," said Rupert, bending over the tablets, "for Virginie said she would like for once to dance the Mazurka with me—but I can easily explain and arrange with her."

"No," said Cyrilla, "you must not think of such a thing—it is of no consequence."

"I had a sort of idea this might happen," said Rupert, "but I did not like to say anything, for you know," he added, laughing, "I belong to Virginie, in a sort of way, for this evening."

Cyrilla drew her pencil through his name.

"Let us send for Conrad; he will be delighted," suggested Rupert.

"O," replied Cyrilla, smiling, "he has gone to bed hours ago; his appearance so alarmed him when he was dressed, that no one could induce him to take a step beyond the door of his room."

"What! did he not even go to the theatre?"

"No."

"I flatter myself he has had rather a loss. Our opera went off famously—don't you think so?"

“ Could not have been better.”

“ I never saw Virginie look so well,” said Rupert; “ and she certainly is a most perfect actress.”

“ And you,” rejoined Cyrilla, “ are, to say the least, a—very tolerable actor.”

“ Playing with *her* would almost inspire an automaton,” said Rupert. “ Scarcely any one else could have made my dull part endurable to me.”

“ I can easily imagine that,” observed Zorndoff, with unusual emphasis; “ there is something very irresistible about her altogether. That she possessed feeling, energy, and passion, I already knew; but that she could be so charmingly naïve and playful was a surprise for which I was not at all prepared.”

“ Nor I either,” said Rupert; “ and though I admire Virginie as much as you or any one can do, and grant that there are moments when she is perfectly fascinating, I find, on reflection, her extraordinary versatility more adapted to public than private life. A too perfect actress inspires a certain degree of mistrust. One fears she may use her power of feigning and moving the passions off as well as on the stage; and it might at last be difficult to discover the line where nature ends and art begins.”

Cyrilla took a long breath and smiled approbation of this opinion; it was perhaps this which induced Zornderff to continue the conversation.

“Actresses who act when off the stage,” he said, “are by no means so common as is generally supposed. I have known many who were infinitely more natural in their general manners than those who, sitting in their boxes as spectators, gratuitously and incessantly acted for any or every one who chose to look at them.”

“I believe we *have* a good many tolerable actors and actresses in common everyday life,” said Rupert. “With regard to professional people, your experience has been so much more extensive than mine, that I am quite willing to believe anything you say about them.”

There was something so unusually indifferent in Rupert’s manner, that had Zorndorff not had a motive for covertly praising Virginie he would not have spoken again. “I may be singular in the idea,” he said, “but do not hesitate to say, that I think it not only possible, but probable, that those who make it their study, and have the power to represent the feelings and passions, if at all successful in their efforts, must possess both in an eminent degree.”

“Are you talking of Virginie now?” asked Rupert, carelessly.

“The remark applies to her, or to any good actor or actress you choose to think of. Why may we not suppose that the feelings of players insensibly become stronger by practice, as well as the sinews of a wrestler’s arm or a dancer’s legs?”

“What a funny idea!” exclaimed Madame de Bellegarde, who just then joined them.

Rupert showed a decided disinclination to the discussion of either feelings or sinews; he whispered a few words to Cyrilla, and then they walked towards the ball-room together.

“Pray go on,” said Madame de Bellegarde, playing with her fan, while she nodded and smiled to her different acquaintances as they passed,—“Pray go on; I like so much to hear you talk.”

“About what?” asked Zorndorff.

“The dancer’s legs, and all that.”

“Rather let us go and look at those now dancing.”

“I thought you had made a vow not to enter the ball-room?”

“I!—make a vow!—For what reason?”

“O, I’m sure I don’t know.—On account of your mourning they said.”

“Who said?”

“I don’t remember; but even if I did, I should not tell you—you look so magnificently ill-tempered to-night. Let me take you to Melanie, who has chosen the ball-room doorway to make her usual observations on the follies of this wicked world, even while she so largely partakes of them. Doesn’t she look uncommonly handsome to-night? Positively quite youthful! Powder and rouge make people appear at least ten years younger. I wish both would come into fashion again, don’t you?”

"No!" he answered, turning to Melanie, beside whom he stood silently looking at the moving throng for some minutes.

Madame de Bellegarde, after having curiously but vainly followed the direction of their eyes, and examined their countenances, said she should rather like to know their thoughts, though she more than suspected they were of a not particularly cheerful description.

"Mine were rather Xerxes like," answered Melanie; "I was thinking where should we all be fifty years hence?"

"Well, I must say," cried Madame de Bellegarde, with an expression of annoyance, "that is even worse than I expected. I believe you never think of anything but being dead and buried—so very uncomfortable and dispiriting. Any one else would have been induced, by these dresses, to retrograde a century in thought; instead of which, you anticipate just enough time to put us in our graves, or make us so old and ugly, that one must shudder at the thought."

"I quite agree with you," said Zorndorff; "let us rather amuse ourselves with the incongruity of the dresses and movements. What," he added, turning to Melanie, "what would your great-grandmother, Adelgunde von Adlerkron, whose picture I have so often admired at Windhorst, say, were she to catch a glimpse of her great-grandchildren flying round the room in this wild manner? Would

she think even the near relationship of Adlerkron and his cousin sufficient to authorize such a public embrace—such a.....”

“Pshaw!” cried Madame de Bellegarde, interrupting him, “*you* are going into another extreme—talking like an antediluvian.”

“I thought,” said Zorndorff, “you proposed returning in imagination to the time of powder and paint.”

“Well, so I did; but do you suppose that people did not dance then?”

“They did, but in a very different manner, if we may believe chronicles and pictures. In those days the gentleman bowed his powdered head over the lady’s little finger, ready to apologize for being under the necessity of touching it.”

“I have read chronicles and seen pictures that tell quite a different story,” she said, carelessly.

“I daresay you have, but the less you speak of them the better. When people now talk of their great-grandmothers, they are supposed to think of flowing robes, dignified manners, and graceful reserve.”

“Not I!” cried Madame de Bellegarde, turning to Klemmhein, who came to remind her of an engagement; “I don’t believe that my grandmothers were in any respect better than I am; and taking us all in all, women are infinitely less worthless now than they were in the times we are representing in costume this evening.”

"I am inclined to agree with her," observed Melanie. "Women certainly are gaining by degrees a higher position in society."

"That was not what she meant," said Zorndorff. "Her reference was merely to morals and manners in days of yore; and in the latter there certainly has been a very evident and remarkable change since the days of our grandmothers."

"For the better, you must allow," said Melanie.

"There is less apparent coquetry, and no affectation of modesty. Where a woman formerly thought it interesting to be ignorant, or scarcely dared to whisper an opinion, she now looks us calmly in the face, neither abashed nor embarrassed, and pronounces judgment without reserve."

"And why should it not be so?" asked Melanie. "Are we not entitled to form an opinion, and give it, as well as you or any of your sex? I have no doubt that another century will emancipate us from the remaining trammels which still so unnecessarily hamper us."

"I did not know that you were an advocate for the emancipation of women," said Zorndorff.

"Nor am I, in the general acceptation of the words," replied Melanie, with unusual earnestness. "I have no wish to infringe on any of your prerogatives—no desire to step out of my sphere; but I think women ought to be given a more liberal education—should be taught to exercise their in-

telleets as well as men, and then they would cease to be considered either mere subjects of pastime, or household drudges, as the case may be."

"That time is long past," said Zorndorff; "and it would indeed be necessary to retrograde a whole century to find men capable of thinking in that way. But are you aware, that even the degree of emancipation which you desire will greatly limit your power?"

"How so?"

"That very difference of education and manner which you so deprecate, is one of your greatest charms. Let a woman talk and argue with us precisely as we do with each other, and we may end by forgetting ourselves so far as to treat her and her opinions in a way that would be as offensive as new to her."

"Not much danger of that, as long as she is young and handsome," said Melanie; "and it is exactly to provide for the succeeding years that I propose a different education. Women living in what is called the world suffer, when their youth is past, mortifications and annoyances which, though not confessed, are but too evident in all those desperate efforts made to preserve and decorate their fading persons. Those whose station in life imposes on them a continual succession of active domestic duties may perhaps pass into age and ugliness imperceptibly; we of the world cannot do so. Our consciousness and dread of age is the

just and severe punishment of a frivolously spent youth, and the only chance of mitigation lies in early laying the foundation for the rational and useful occupation of later years."

"A sort of intellectual provision for old age," said Zorndorff.

"Precisely. I would give home enjoyments to those restless unhappy women who night after night weary themselves at card-tables, or wander disconsolately about ball-rooms, where their grandchildren are or might be dancing."

"And what are the improvements in education which you consider necessary to produce this last most desirable result?" asked Zorndorff.

"I have ceased to think of improvements, and propose a total reform," answered Melanie. "Why, if we have the same improvable minds as your sex, should they not be cultivated by the same methods—why should reason be left to itself with us, and so carefully disciplined with you?"

Zorndorff shrugged his shoulders, and suggested that it would be advisable, perhaps, to try the experiment on a few; the result would, at all events, be interesting.

"Exactly what I thought," cried Melanie, eagerly. "An education, to the age of fifteen or sixteen, precisely the same for girls as for boys."

"Pray don't stop there," said Zorndorff, "or Greek and Latin will be the chief acquirements

gained, and they will hardly prevent your old ladies from frequenting card-tables and ball-rooms."

Melanie smiled good-humouredly, and Zorndorff added: "May I hope that, instead of leap-frog and ball, you will substitute knitting and netting?"

"Rather skipping-ropes and hoops," replied Melanie, gaily; "and though you may laugh at me, I am so convinced of the excellence of the idea, that I have serious thoughts of speaking to Rupert about Tina."

"Suppose," said Zorndorff, "you were to adopt that child, and have her educated according to your plan. She is a good healthy subject for an experiment, and I have no doubt her father would confide her to you more willingly than to any one else."

"Perhaps so.....but a.....she has no rank or connexion, is not in the least pretty, or even aristocratic *looking*. What on earth could I do with her afterwards?"

Zorndorff bit his lip to hide a smile of derision. Any one but his aunt would have received a sarcastic reply; but great personal regard, and a sort of involuntary admiration for the grains of sense that like particles of gold could occasionally be sifted from her nonsense, always effectually imposed silence on him.

Just at that moment Cyrilla entered the room with Rupert, followed by Lindesmar and some young men, who laughingly exclaimed: "Lots!—let us draw lots for the dance: it is the only way to end the matter without a quarrel."

"As you please," said Cyrilla, sitting down listlessly; and while Rupert tore up some visiting-cards into different lengths, she added, "My ball-book is in a state of hopeless confusion to-night!"

"This is pleasant," whispered Zorndorff to Melanie. "While others surround.....my wife, and draw lots for a dance, I scarcely dare to speak to her! I don't think I can stand this much longer."

"Remember that you are yourself to blame," she answered.

"Do you think I would submit to such treatment were it otherwise?" he rejoined. "My only consolation is, that I do not suffer alone. Cyrilla's pride is completely wearing her out. All her efforts have not enabled her to conceal from me that she is unhappy and ill."

"Ill!" cried Melanie; "why every one says she is looking particularly well—quite lovely to-night."

"She is rouged," said Zorndorff; "but look at the deadly paleness of the rest of her face. Can you not see her lips quivering when she tries to smile?"

"That is because you are so near," she answered, naïvely.

"I know it. She is no actress, and lets me read her thoughts like a book."

"And can you see her unhappy and suffering without an inclination to relent? Make her free, Edouard. Your doing so now would indeed be an act of magnanimity."

"It would be highly dramatic undoubtedly," said Zorndorff, sarcastically. "Perhaps you can tell me in whose hand I ought to place hers when, in the act of resignation, I look upwards, mutely imploring a blessing on a union which is to wreck my happiness for life.....Lindesmar's, Adlerkron's, or one of these noisy hussars."

Melanie did not answer. She was evidently hurt, both by his words and manner. He perceived it, and added, with suppressed vehemence, "No, Melanie, this is no comedy that we are playing, but it may become a tragedy if Cyrilla give me any just cause for jealousy. The promise I made her in that letter, to which she so often appeals, contained no clause to bind me in such a case."

This was almost too much even for Melanie. "And *he* dares to talk of jealousy," she thought, as she watched him leaving the room. "O what different measures men have for their own conduct and for ours!"

Like all summer balls, the dancing continued until long after daylight, when some hands with youthful temerity drawing aside the curtains, and admitting a flood of light, the tired chaperons were so effectually scared, that an almost immediate dispersion of the company followed, and only a few select friends remained to join Rupert and his cousins in the breakfast-room. Cyrilla's feelings, after her night of revelry, were unsatisfactory to the greatest degree. Wearied with dancing, and

the forced gaiety which she had thought it necessary to assume, the whole vanity and folly of such pleasures began slowly but distinctly to rise before her mind for the first time in her life ; and while still recalling the insipid events of the past night, she walked to the open window, and impatiently rubbed the rouge from her cheeks. The friction produced a natural colour instead, and she perhaps never looked better than at the moment that Zorndorff and Conrad entered the room together.

“ Ah,” cried Melanie, who was enveloping herself in additional draperies of lace, “ you who have wisely slept as usual, are come, I suppose, to laugh at our worn-out appearance.”

“ No,” answered Zorndorff; “ I have spent the time since we parted in walking up and down my room, and making occasional excursions to the musicians’ gallery, whence I could see everything that was going on in the ball-room.....the night seemed interminable to me !”

“ Cyrilla complained of its length also,” said Melanie. “ For my part, since I have ceased to be actively engaged at balls, instead of feeling the ennui experienced by other spectators, I cannot help being painfully conscious of the quick passing of time, the palpable loss of which is more evident in a ball-room than anywhere else. A little world in itself for the time being, each dance is an epoch—each.....”

“ Come, Melanie,” cried Julie, “ don’t moralize

until after breakfast ; and as to loss of time, I should think it is pretty much the same thing whether we spend the night dancing or sleeping."

"Not quite," said Melanie, smiling ; "you will find a considerable difference a few hours hence."

"Well, then, I shall either go to bed or sleep on a sofa."

"And turn day into night," said Melanie.

"I do not see any harm in that either," rejoined Julie, yawning ; "other people do the same."

"That argument is unanswerable," observed Zorndorff with a slight sneer.

"I suppose," said Madame de Bellegarde, "we shall have another ball or a *déjeuner* when we get up Melanie's drama?"

"Drama and ball must be postponed until autumn," said Rupert ; "the President cannot be induced to prolong his stay beyond the 12th of August, although my leave of absence lasts until the 24th, and after that we have inspections, and reviews, sham battles, and a camp outside the town."

"Delightful !" cried Julie. "I hope the camp will be at our side of the town, near Neu-hof I mean."

"If I be consulted," he answered, laughing, "I shall not forget to mention your wishes."

"It will be warm work for us," said Klemmhein, "but a brilliant ending for your military

career. Adlerkron, until all is over you cannot well think of deserting us."

"Of course not," said Rupert; "and to a little work after so much play I have no sort of objection."

At this moment the children appeared at the door, and stood there gazing in silent astonishment at the strangeness of the dresses, and unexpected number of people at the breakfast-table.

"Come in, come in—don't you know me?" cried Rupert, and immediately they rushed towards him and began to feel the embroidery on his coat and to pull his ruffles.

Virginie first half-stifled her child with kisses, and then brought him to Rupert.

"Is he not beginning to look healthy!" she exclaimed.

"You *have* brought some colour to his cheeks by dint of kissing," said Mr de Bellegarde; "but if you were to bestow equally violent demonstrations of affection on me or on Victor, I daresay the result would be the same."

"Alphonse is really getting quite strong," observed Madame de Bellegarde; "and for my part I am no admirer of desperately healthy-looking children—very red cheeks are decidedly vulgar. Don't you think so?" she added, turning to Zorn-dorff.

"Excuse me.....I was speaking to my aunt, and did not hear....."

"Alphonse has become quite healthy since he has been at Freilands—his paleness is constitutional."

"Most probably," said Zorndorff.

"He is remarkably handsome," she continued, with a glance towards her husband that plainly proved, on this subject at least, they did not agree.

"I am sure you must admire his great black eyes."

"Of course I do," replied Zorndorff, "they are full of expression like his mother's."

"You could scarcely bore Zorndorff more than by talking to him about children," observed Rupert.

"I confess that I am no baby fancier," said Zorndorff, coldly, "and do not like children until they are reasonable beings—until they have ideas."

"And do you mean to say that Pertl here is not reasonable, that he has not ideas?" cried Rupert; "why, he has already shaped his plans for the future, and is fully resolved to study diligently in order to become a good man, like his father, and preach in the church at Windhorst."

"If you please," said the boy, with some embarrassment, "I think I should rather be like some one else, now."

"Indeed! Who then?"

"I should like to be.....a.....a.....a tall hussar, and wear a dolman, and ride a prancing black horse about the streets."

"And, you young rascal, do you suppose that

hussars have nothing to do but to ride prancing horses about the streets?" asked Rupert, laughing.

"O, I should have a gun too, and go out with the gamekeeper; and then I would talk Italian to Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron, and ride with her, and lift her over the stepping-stones at the park ford when the water was deep, and....."

"That boy *has* ideas," said Zorndorff. "Come here, my friend, and tell me what else you would do if you were a tall hussar?"

But Pertl did not like the manner of his interlocutor, and drew back.

Rupert laughed, and told him he might consult his father about a change of profession during the course of the ensuing week, when he expected him at Freilands.

"Coming here?" asked Melanie, quickly.

"Yes, but only for a day or two. O, here comes the President—for the first time in his life too late for breakfast!"

Fearing remarks about their sleepy tired looks and fantastic dresses, there was a general movement of the whole party the moment he entered the room, Zorndorff alone remaining at the breakfast-table, apparently in deep thought, his head resting on his hand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE unnecessary exertions made by Zorndorff on the evening of the ball, still more perhaps an effort to ride into Exfort a few days afterwards, had caused a relapse, which, though not dangerous, had been cause sufficient for his physician and the President to insist on his remaining at Freilands for some time longer ; and there he either wandered uneasily from room to room, or, half reclining on one of the sofas, sometimes talked, sometimes read ; but always, when Cyrilla was present, following her slightest movements with watchful eyes, and endeavouring eagerly to hear every word she spoke, even on the most indifferent subjects. He never directly addressed her himself, but made every possible effort to draw her into conversation through the medium of others ; and every one, from different motives, seconded his endeavours, excepting Lindesmar and Rupert. The latter, conscious of the restraint caused by Zorndorff's presence, and perceiving with anxiety her daily-increasing paleness

and nervous irritation of manner, proposed a renewal of their boating and riding excursions, to which she acceded after having stipulated that Conrad should be invited to join them. Zorndorff watched her goings and comings with a silent exasperation not unobserved by Melanie, who, however, hopeless of inducing him to relent, and fearful of provoking the anger of both by further interference, had resolved altogether to abstain from expostulations or entreaties on either side.

The weather, which had long been uninterruptedly fine, began at last to threaten a change; and one morning after Rupert had announced that the barometer indicated storm and rain, and that a succession of dark-looking clouds were already visible in the distance, Cyrilla silently collected her colours and crayons, took possession of a window in Melanie's drawing-room, and accepted with thanks Conrad's proposal to bring her some wild flowers before the rain began. While they were still speaking, the post arrived. There were no specimens of "adhesive cream-laid letter envelopes"—no heaps of little neatly initialed notes about nothing, as in England since the stamp era. A few diminutive newspapers were solemnly deposited on a marble table, and then three oddly folded with post marks disfigured letters presented to Virginie, Cyrilla, and Conrad. Virginie grew pale as her eyes caught the one addressed to her, and she afterwards started and trembled in a very remarkable manner

when she observed that Rupert was looking at her inquiringly.

Cyrilla clasped her hands, and smiled and blushed with pleasure as she exclaimed : " From Fernanda ! O, Rupert, let us go to Melanie."

Receiving no answer, she looked up and perceived that he had followed Virginie to a distant window ; and while apparently jesting about the letter which her only partially counterfeited agitation prevented her from reading, he was gently endeavouring to gain possession of some paper enclosed in it. Cyrilla watched them for a moment, and then slowly left the room, unheeding in her turn of Conrad's exclamation : " Salzburg ! my aunt !" and the crimson flush that immediately overspread his face, and made his ears tingle as the colour in them deepened into purple.

When Cyrilla returned with Melanie, about half-an-hour afterwards, they found Zorndorff alone at one of the balcony windows watching the drifting clouds, and listening with apparent interest to the long gusts of wind that moaned round the house.

" I have just ordered all the windows to be closed," said Melanie. " Don't you think, Edouard, it would be better for you, in your present state of health, to avoid that strong current of air in which you are standing ?"

Zorndorff murmured something about his life not being worth preserving, which made Melanie close

the window herself in the decided manner of a careful mother, who will permit no contradiction from a wayward child when she fears health may be injured by it. Now, it is a curious fact, that the very youngest and most inexperienced women intuitively assume a right to dictate where health or personal comfort is concerned, and that the most refractory of men seldom or never in such cases dispute their authority. Zorndorff submitted with a look of gratitude, and said he rejoiced to think there was one left in the world to care for him.

Perhaps Melanie suspected his wish to draw Cyrrilla into some explanation, and dreaded a scene which she foresaw would not end satisfactorily ; perhaps his really weakened state made her fear violent emotion for him. She took no notice of either of his speeches, but asked, abruptly, " Where is Rupert ? "

" In his study or armory, or whatever you call that queer room of his ; but you had better not interrupt him just now. "

" Why not ? "

" Because he went there with the Viscountess some time ago, and they seemed to have very important business to transact. "

" Business ? Nonsense ! "

" I assure you I am serious, " said Zorndorff, making a very faint effort to detain her. " It is some secret affair, and an interruption might cause great annoyance. "

Melanie smiled incredulously, and walked on after Cyrilla.

"Listen to me, and judge for yourself," said Zorndorff, following; and when they stopped he added, with affected reluctance: "I heard enough before Adlerkron left the room to convince me..... that.....he.....is....."

"What?"

"About to pay.....her debts. He commences with the milliner's bill to-day; and, if I may judge by the expression of her face, it can be no trifling one."

"Edouard, you must be mistaken—such a thing is not possible!"

"Why not? She and Adlerkron are *very* intimate."

"This is traducing Virginie in an unpardonable manner!" cried Melanie, indignantly.

"You now force me to request you to go on, and convince yourself," rejoined Zorndorff.

"You are sure that Virginie is in the room?"

"Quite."

Melanie opened the door, and then had but just time to see that Rupert, sitting at his writing-table and biting the top of a pen, was quietly watching Virginie as she counted and arranged various packets of bank-notes. A moment afterwards the current of air between the open windows and door caught the loose notes, and sent them fluttering through the room. It was in vain that Virginie

threw her handkerchief over some, and Rupert, blushing deeply, made snatches at others, while he exclaimed—"My notes !.....my notes !..... Virginie, you shall never help me to count money again !"

"Cyrilla's pallor, Melanie's look of reproachful amazement, and Zorndorff's cynical smile, immediately convinced Virginie that the truth was more than suspected. For a few seconds she struggled with shame and vexation, made a violent effort to appear unconcerned,—but then, bending her head down on the table beside her, burst into a passion of tears.

Rupert started from his chair, and, with some violence, began to close the windows. Cyrilla left the room silently, followed by Melanie, after she had observed, more reproachfully than apologetically, "That Rupert had given her permission to enter his study without ceremony at all times, and that she had not believed it possible her presence could be an intrusion when Virginie was with him !"

Cyrilla sat down at her drawing-table, and absently played with her crayons ; while Melanie animadverted on what they had just witnessed in unusually strong terms, ending by wishing very heartily that "Virginie would return to her own people, for there was every reason to fear that if she remained much longer at Freilands she would either injure her reputation or contrive to inveigle Rupert

into a marriage—he was so foolishly good-natured and generous.”

Cyrilla sighed, but gave no answer ; and when Melanie left her she leaned back in her chair, vainly endeavouring to think calmly and without prejudice of all she had just seen ; but, on hearing soon after the sounds of movement in the adjoining room, she hastily bent over her colours, and began to rummage among them very diligently for some unknown tint. Virginie had probably chosen to retire by the back staircase, for Rupert entered alone, at first impetuously enough ; but, before he had walked half-way towards her, his step slackened, and on reaching the window he stooped down and whispered—“ Cyrilla.....dearest.....you are not displeased.....are you ? ”

“ A little with myself, for having yielded to my curiosity, and followed Melanie into your room so unceremoniously,” she answered in a low voice, which, however, was heard distinctly by Zorndorff, who had taken possession of a *chaise longue*, separated from her by a thick screen of large-leaved ivy, intended to protect the occupant from the disagreeable cross light of an end room. Rupert had, of course, seen him directly on entering—Cyrilla was quite unconscious of his presence.

“ That is not what I mean,” continued Rupert, in a still lower voice ; “ I want to know if you are displeased with me ? ”

“ I have no right to be so.”

A pause ensued.

"I suppose,"—and here he made a slight sign towards the ivy screen, unperceived, however, by Cyrilla, who was scribbling grotesque heads on some paper before her,—“I suppose *he* told you told Melanie.....all he knew about this provoking affair?”

Cyrilla did not answer.

“Just like him!—never straightforward.....false alike to friend and foe!”

Alarmed at the suppressed violence of his manner, Cyrilla thought it necessary to offer the only excuse she could think of for Zorndorff.

“He at first only told Melanie that you were engaged on some important business, and rather endeavoured to dissuade her from interrupting you.”

She blushed deeply at the equivocation which her fears had prompted, and turned quite away from him while speaking.

“Then I have done him injustice.....perhaps but Virginie said she was sure that both you and Melanie knew all, and.....”

“We know enough to feel a thorough contempt for her,” said Cyrilla, slightly.

“Allow me to attempt a justification of her conduct before you condemn her,” rejoined Rupert, eagerly, and no longer speaking in his former scarcely audible manner. “That Virginie should prefer taking.....or.....or.....borrowing a small

sum of money from me, instead of applying to inquisitive and harshly judging relations, I find not only pardonable, but quite natural."

"And I find it extremely improper," said Cyrilla, decidedly.

"Suspend your judgment a little. You have never, like poor Virginie, been the wife of a selfish, worthless man, who, finding means to gratify all his own luxurious habits, has left you to the chance kindness of friends or the grudgingly doled out bounty of heartless relations!"

Cyrilla swallowed once or twice with evident difficulty, and Zorndorff clutched the cushion beside him, as Rupert continued what he considered a justification of Virginie.

"Of de Rubigny I have but to say, that gold was his idol, and, to procure it, honour and reputation were sacrificed without reserve. When obtained, it was altogether lavished upon himself; and though frequently possessed of large sums of money won at the gaming-table, his wife could hardly obtain from him sufficient for the common necessities of life. But why talk to you of such things? What can you understand of the struggles and trials of a neglected, insulted woman, whose very existence seemed at times forgotten by her husband?"

Rupert paused, but Cyrilla attempted no answer until he added, "Virginie has told me she was often in want of a few Friedrichs d'or.....in want of

the dress necessary for the society in which she lived ! You will find it difficult to imagine trifling wishes of that kind ungratified."

"Not at all," replied Cyrilla. "My wishes have frequently soared beyond my means ; but that I believe to be the case with every one in the world, no matter how high their station. Superfluous desires expand in tolerably exact proportion to one's elevation."

"May I ask you to tell me some of yours?" cried Rupert, eagerly.

Cyrilla shook her head. "I have learned from earliest infancy to control them," she answered quietly ; "but even supposing it possible that I had for such purposes incurred debts, I can at least assure you, Rupert, that nothing in this world would have induced me to allow any man, excepting my father or brother, to pay a milliner's bill for me—Virginie has a brother, and yet deliberately preferred you !"

Rupert bit his lip, and observed, that Lindesmar could not effectually have assisted her without applying to his grandfather, on whom he was still dependent.

Again Cyrilla shook her head in an unsatisfactory manner, and Rupert continued : "If you will not listen to a defence, let me at least offer an excuse ; you are probably not aware that her position in society was one which made a considerable expenditure in dress absolutely necessary....."

"No position can authorize any one to incur debts they cannot pay. Do not expect to make me change my opinion on this subject, Rupert."

"Then," he said, half laughing, "I give that up, and only ask you to view reasonably her applying to me in her really trifling pecuniary difficulties: the whole affair, I assure you, is scarcely worth talking about."

"I am glad to hear it on her account; but the amount of money makes no difference in the act itself. What would you think were you to hear that I had in like manner taken Count Lindesmar into my confidence, and having complained of the cruelty of my relations, requested him to assist me out of my 'trifling pecuniary difficulties?'"

Rupert was silent.

"Well, what would you think? What would you say?"

"No matter; the case is quite different: you have not known Lindesmar all your life as I have his sister."

"True, but you forget that there are some other circumstances which ought to have made Virginie apply to any one rather than to you, had she possessed the slightest delicacy of feeling."

"Women judge women more severely than we do," observed Rupert; while, to hide his embarrassment, he rocked himself lightly on the back of her chair; "you have not left me a word to say."

"I believe you," she said, leaning back, and turning her head towards him. "You would have spoken better had you not in your heart of hearts been of my opinion from the commencement."

"Well.....a.....but with regard to my part in this affair, I should like to know that you did not judge me quite so rigorously as my unfortunate companion."

"No," said Cyrilla, looking up to him with the sweetest smile imaginable; "I only agree with Melanie in thinking you a good-natured generous fool!"

"Spoken like your own dear self!" cried Rupert; and what he might have added had Zorndorff not been present, it is hard to say. As it was, he bent forward, touched his lip with his finger, and then walked quickly out of the room.

Zorndorff, who had by no means been hiding behind the ivy screen, and had only intended to remain there until he could speak to Cyrilla without danger of interruption, was just preparing to advance towards her, when the sound of approaching steps deterred him. A moment after Conrad appeared, his hands full of wild flowers of every possible description.

"You don't mean to say you have been out in this desperate rain, and already collected all these beautiful specimens?" cried Cyrilla extending her hands.

"No ; I gathered them this morning for you : they have been in a glass of water ; does that make any difference ?"

"None whatever. I always put them in water when I paint, for they cannot bear the atmosphere of a room as well as garden flowers. But you must have been quite at the marshy end of the upper lake for these plants !"

Conrad nodded.

"And on the moor for the heath ? Most exemplary of cousins ! Just sit down there, will you..... I don't see why I should not have a sketch of you as well as of other much less useful people. I have plenty of time to-day."

"Do you mean to put me into the album ?" he asked, taking a chair opposite her.

"No ; you shall form one of my own private collection. I hope you feel flattered at the distinction ?"

"*Indeed* I do."

"So you ought ; but you need not blush about it. Draw that japan screen between you and the other window ; the light in this room is the very worst in the whole house for painting. That will do—now remain quiet."

"I thought you preferred people talking to you when you were taking their portraits ?"

"*Cela dépend*. Yours would not be like if very animated-looking ; it must be a silent, not what is called a speaking likeness."

"You think me a stupid fellow."

"No, I don't," said Cyrilla, beginning to sketch with her usual rapidity. "I have heard you talk to Rupert in a manner that would have removed any suspicions of the kind had I ever entertained them."

"I do not understand.....cannot remember....."

"You see," she said, with pretended gravity, "when men walk up and down a room in our presence, talking of things beyond our comprehension, and using quantities of Latin words, it is astonishing how our respect increases for them."

"You are laughing at me."

"Not at all, I assure you. Rupert has since taken a good deal of trouble to explain to me the difference between *allodium* and *feudum*; but I could not quite understand all he told me about the *Fidei-commis*s, which makes you mutually inherit from each other in case either should die without direct descendants."

"Did he tell you that Freilands, and some other property which has accumulated during his minority, is altogether at his own disposal?"

"Yes," answered Cyrilla, smiling; "and even promised that, in case he died unmarried, it should be mine. I don't think my chance is very great."

"So then," said Conrad, bringing his chair by a sudden movement in contact with her table, and leaning his elbow on it—"So then he has spoken to you, and you are not angry or offended with him?"

"About what?" asked Cyrilla, looking up amazed.

Conrad blushed deeply, and stammered, "About his having refused.....I mean, the not consenting to.....in short, when I was in Salzburg my aunt Olga told me of the family compact, which.....he declined fulfilling."

Cyrilla's hand lost its steadiness; she threw down her pencil, and stood up with the evident intention of leaving him.

"For goodness sake, Cyrilla, don't be angry with me!" he cried, anxiously. "Nothing was further from my thoughts than an intention of annoying you in any way. I should never have referred to that incomprehensible affair if I had not had a personal motive, and a very strong one, too. Just read this letter, and you will understand it all."

"You had better tell me the contents," she said, coldly; "the writing is unknown to me."

"It is mine. I can write better than I can speak."

"And I am to read it in your very presence?"

"If you will, I shall be greatly obliged to you."

Cyrilla read it, folded it up with a half thoughtful, half amused smile, and returned it to him, while gently shaking her head.

"Is that the answer?"

"The best I can give you. Let us consider it a mere jest, and forget it."

"I cannot," said Conrad, resolutely; "for I

have thought of nothing else from the moment I first saw you. Here is a letter to you from my aunt, enclosed in one to me which I received but an hour ago ; and in it you will perceive.....”

“ Ah ! ” said Cyrilla, interrupting him ; “ now I begin to understand you ; ” and she held out her hand for the letters.

Nothing could form a greater contrast than the calm, slightly ironical smile, with which the young girl read the letter, commanding her forthwith to bestow her hand and affections on her cousin Conrad instead of her cousin Rupert, and the flushed, anxious face of the young man, whose want of knowledge of the ways of women made him augur well from her composure.

“ It seems,” she began, looking out of the window, instead of at him, “ it seems you were in a great hurry to get possession of that old house, and its supposed treasures and antiquities.”

“ I went to Salzburg solely for the purpose of negotiating the purchase.”

“ And ended by negotiating a marriage,” rejoined Cyrilla, archly.

He blushed, until his features seemed to swell and throb painfully.

“ Now, see, Conrad,” she continued, in the same tone, “ I have too great a regard for you to let you be imposed on in this shameless manner. Putting myself out of the question, as a thing of no importance.....”

Conrad endeavoured to interrupt her; but she continued, "The house is really not worth the five thousand Friedrichs d'or, the rate at which my aunt has thought proper to value it and you me. The situation is unfashionable, disagreeable; and it might even be necessary to consult an architect about its condition before you could attempt your projected excavations."

"But," cried Conrad, eagerly, "I don't care at all about the condition of the house *now*."

"Still," said Cyrilla, "as Rupert will be sure to let you have it cheap hereafter, and without any encumbrance whatever, I really must advise you to wait."

"Wait?" he repeated, inquiringly; "why should we wait?"

Cyrilla smiled; she almost laughed. In the ignorance or innocence of his heart, he felt greatly reassured by her manner, and added, gaily: "Our aunt Olga certainly can drive as hard a bargain as any one I ever met. I wish you had heard her appreciating and me depreciating her old barrack!"

"I can imagine it," said Cyrilla, tapping the letters on the palm of her left hand, while her eyes continued fixed on his with a certain mirthful expression, that could only have been misunderstood by a *very* inexperienced man.

"I began to fear we should never come to an agreement," he continued, laughing; "for I had been fool enough to let her see my great desire to

be in immediate possession, when all at once she informed me of the clause in my uncle's will concerning you, and proposed our ending the difference by my taking you, with the old house as dowry."

"And you agreed at once!—submitted to the dictates of prudence in the disposal of your hand without demur! Did you know what you were doing?"

"Perfectly. I saw your picture, knew that our ages were alike.....connexion desirable, and all that sort of thing."

"Right royally arranged, to say the least!" observed Cyrilla.

"Not the worse for that," said Conrad, quickly. "Royal marriages, on an average, turn out as well as others. Besides, I had my father's and grandfather's example, and have heard them both say, often enough to make me remember it, that friends or relations could generally choose better than the persons concerned, who, more or less, were always blinded by personal inclination."

"But surely you think a *little* personal inclination necessary," said Cyrilla.

"O, of course; but I never doubted that coming in time; for my aunt, and a whole lot of Salzburg people, told me you were quite charming."

"But you heard also that Rupert had refused me," interposed Cyrilla, amused at his boyish candour, and mistaking his certainty of success for jesting. "Did not that alarm you?"

“Not at all. In the course of conversation I discovered that that had taken place before he had seen you ; and, from some unguarded expressions of my aunt’s, I found out that she suspected Rupert had changed his mind, and was only trying to make use of me to force him to a decision.”

A good deal surprised at the acuteness of this remark, Cyrilla looked up attentively.

“That was the reason I kept aloof at first,” he continued ; “for, with Rupert as a rival, I could have had no chance at all, you know. So I watched him, and let him laugh at my supposed fear of women and dislike to their society, while, in fact, I was only diffident, because I knew nothing about them. I don’t remember my mother, I have had no sisters, and we never saw any one but my tutor’s wife at Waldenburg. I liked her too. She was a good creature, but dismally ugly.”

“Were I to judge from my own observation,” said Cyrilla, smiling, “I should have supposed that you preferred my pretty Selim, or the brace of pointers given you by Rupert the other day, to all the women in Christendom.”

Conrad seemed a little hurt. “We have jested long enough,” he said, after a pause ; “my letter must have convinced you that I am quite serious in my proposal. I have no experience in these affairs, for I never loved any one—I mean any woman until now.”

“Ah, bah ! what do you know about love ?”

cried Cyrilla, slightly, as she commenced putting aside her drawing materials.

"Quite as much as you I should suppose," he answered, with some pique.

"Scarcely; for it never occurred to me to imagine my regard for you, or yours for me, anything but the natural inclination towards friendship, which, as tenth cousins twenty times removed, we ought to feel for each other."

"I rather rejoiced in the distance of our connexion, as offering one obstacle less," he answered, gravely. "My aunt told me that Rupert seemed to think a nearer relationship an impediment." He paused; but, perceiving that with an impatient gesture she was about to leave him, he stretched out a trembling hand to detain her, and in a torrent of passionate words, that seemed to sweep away all his diffidence, overwhelmed her with so unreserved a declaration of his love and expectations, that she stood before him silent and dismayed, scarcely believing the evidence of her eyes and ears that it was indeed Conrad who stood before her and so spoke.

Yet, after all, there was nothing very astonishing in what had occurred. Zorndorff, as he looked frowningly through his ivy screen, was angry but not surprised; a very few days had convinced him that Cyrilla had unawares become the object of a violent first love to a young man, who, he knew, had been educated at home in perfect seclusion by

an anxious father ; and, now but just escaped from the superintendence of an elderly watchful guardian, was quite ready to adore the first pretty face and graceful figure that presented itself, and, in defiance of the lessons of prudence carefully instilled into his mind, equally eager to offer and willing to bestow himself and his large fortune upon the same. It rather struck Zorndorff as a singular instance of wisdom, that prudence and forethought had at all directed Conrad's choice ; but it had done so far less than either he or Cyrilla supposed. The old house with its buried treasure had seized upon the imagination of the boy ; the antiquities had interested the studious youth ; and the early marriage so often recommended by his father became an imperative duty to the man : but had Cyrilla been "dismally ugly," like his tutor's wife, we may be allowed to take it for granted that neither the treasure nor the antiquities, not even the duty of providing a *dame châtelaine* for Waldenburg, or the laudable desire to give a home to an orphan relation, would have moved him.

As his impetuosity began to subside, his eloquence degenerated into something like complaints of having been led, by her evident avoidance of Rupert during the last few weeks, to suppose her indifferent towards, if not displeased with, the latter ; while the kindness and familiarity with which he himself had, from the commencement of their acquaintance, been treated *by her*, had na-

turally led him to draw conclusions in his own favour.

Here Cyrilla stopped him. "That was a great error, Conrad, and you do me injustice if you imagine I ever endeavoured to attract you, or wished to make you like me, otherwise than as a friend or distant relation. I feel myself blameless, and can only lament the inconceivable inexperience on your part which has led to this painful mistake."

"Yes; I acknowledge that I am very inexperienced," said Conrad, despondingly.

"Very," said Cyrilla.

"I suppose my aunt's wishes will have no influence with you?"

"None whatever."

"And may I not at least hope that time"

"Time," said Cyrilla, quickly, "can make no change in me, but it will enable you to forget, or, what is better, laugh at this affair as merely an amusing episode in your life."

"No," rejoined Conrad, bitterly; "I shall never forget or laugh at the recollection of this day. Experience, they say, is the best teacher, and this lesson shall not be lost upon me. Never again will I trust gentle manners, candid speeches, or flattering familiarity."

"Familiarity is no proof of affection in a case of this kind," interposed Cyrilla; "rather the contrary."

“With you, perhaps, but not with others,” cried Conrad; and, stung by the self-possession of her manner, while he still struggled so hard with tears his manhood scorned to shed, he continued, “You will scarcely deny that Madame de Rubigny is as much in love with Rupert as a woman can well be, and she is familiar enough when in his room every morning.”

Cyrilla, who had been progressing towards the doorway, stopped, and he added, “You look surprised; I thought every one knew that Rupert chooses to have Alphonse continually with him, and that Madame de Rubigny naturally follows her child.”

“They have been intimate from childhood,” began Cyrilla, quite as anxious to excuse him to herself as to Conrad.

“O, I know that,” he said. “Don’t suppose I blame Rupert for not objecting to have the Viscountess constantly with him; it would be very odd if he did. She humours his fancies famously, reads all his letters, and, by Jove, yesterday she knew better than he did where to find the fowling-piece I asked him to lend me! Remarkably clever woman—she understands perfectly what she is about.”

So did Conrad at that moment, with all his inexperience; but no sooner had he perceived Cyrilla’s rapid change of colour, and the anxious inquiring look she fixed upon him, than he repented

what he had said, and endeavoured to soften it by adding, that "Rupert did not much mind Madame de Rubigny's presence—that he went on writing, and sometimes had his steward or woodranger in the room."

Still Cyrilla lingered hesitatingly near the door, dreading yet wishing to know more, and Conrad, though quite unconscious they were overheard, lowered his voice as he again approached her, and said, "I see—I understand it all now—you are—engaged to him."

"No, oh no," she answered, shrinking as if she feared further questioning.

"Then, I tell you what, Cyrilla," he cried, with a magnanimity quite thrown away upon her, "before I leave Freilands to-morrow, I shall give him my opinion of the way he is going on.—This sort of hesitating would be bad enough with Madame de Rubigny, but with you, his own cousin, it is perfectly unpardonable. I think, too, I may hint," he added, with a forced smile, "or more than hint, that he will not be dismissed with as heavy a heart as I shall take back to Waldenburg."

"For heaven's sake, Conrad, say nothing to Rupert," cried Cyrilla, endeavouring to stop him as he hurried past her, affecting a serenity he was far from feeling. "Conrad, I entreat....." But her cousin was gone, and in his stead Count Lindesmar came towards her, and spoke a few words with most unusual gravity.

"Excuse me," said Cyrilla, passing him without a look; "I must speak to Conrad—who has misunderstood me in some strange way."

"Every one seems out of temper to-day," muttered Lindesmar, as he caught a glimpse of Zorndorff's gloomy countenance. "The weather may have affected the others, but I have a serious disappointment to complain of. Only imagine, Zorndorff, the appointment I was so sure of obtaining here has been given to Dittmar!"

"I am sorry, but not surprised," he answered, gravely.

"And yet with the letters and recommendations that I brought here, I think I had every reason to expect the first vacant situation."

"One personal present enemy can destroy the effect of a dozen letters or the warmest recommendations."

"But I do not believe I have an enemy in the world. The only thing I fear is, that the President may not be quite favourably disposed towards my family." This was said half interrogatively; but Zorndorff did not answer, though he continued thoughtfully to watch Lindesmar as he walked up and down the room, gesticulating a good deal, according to his usual custom.

"I say, Zorndorff," he continued, stopping suddenly before him; "if your uncle be in any way prejudiced against me, I should like to know it, as

in that case, my remaining here any longer would be folly."

Zorndorff paused for a moment before he replied. "My uncle is very guarded in giving an opinion of any one; but if you wish it, Lindesmar, I can speak to him, and obtain the information you desire."

"Pray do; for, you see, being passed over in this way is both mortifying and irritating; and should it occur again, I shall be greatly tempted to return to my grandfather at Amboise."

He left the room as he spoke, and Zorndorff, walking quickly into a distant and but little frequented apartment, looked carefully round him to ascertain that no inquisitive eyes beheld him, while he yielded to some rather vehement demonstrations of the anger provoked by the events of the last hour.

CHAPTER IX.

LINDESMAR, infinitely disgusted with the world and its ways, the weather, and everything else he happened to think of, wandered listlessly down the stairs and about the hall, until attracted by the sound of laughter to the billiard-room. There he found Rupert with some officers of his regiment, who having been on the road to Freilands during the storm, and completely wet by the subsequent rain, were now equipped, from his wardrobe, in a strange mixture of civil and military morning and evening garments ; while Major Arnheim, who was a large athletic man, not having found anything to suit his dimensions, had been obliged to have recourse to the *chasseur*, and now gravely stalked round the billiard-table in Rupert's livery.

"It is a pity his *fiancée* cannot see him," cried Klemmhein, laughing.

"She would not look at him if she were here," said Rupert.

“What !” cried Arnheim, turning suddenly round—“Not look at me !”

“Not in that dress certainly, without being particularly requested to do so.”

“I should like to try the experiment,” said Arnheim, “if I had an opportunity.”

“Try it on my cousins, who will be sure to order tea half-an-hour hence.”

But Arnheim did not seem to have any curiosity where they were concerned ; he shrugged his shoulders and went on with his game. Not so Klemmhein ; he instantly seized the idea, thought that playing servant to the Countess Falkenstein and her sister must be very pleasant work ; and after having been a little encouraged by the others, actually put on a livery, and waited impatiently until an occasion should offer for presenting himself.

At length a bell rang—he was given a tray, and, furnished with tea-things and the necessary directions by the footman whose place he had taken, he walked up to Melanie’s drawing-room. She was just entering it with Cyrilla, and speaking in a low, earnest manner, about something that seemed of absorbing interest to both. Completely occupied with the expectation of his detection, Klemmhein paid little attention to the subject of their conversation, until a sign being made for him to approach, he stood with laughing face and tray in hand between them. Not once did they look up, or even

seem conscious that a human being besides themselves was present. Slowly and absently they dropped the sugar into their cups, held the cream-jug poised in the air, while they looked at each other intently, and spoke words of mysterious import, calculated to excite his curiosity, quite as much as it would have done that of the Hans or Caspar whose place he filled.

"As to how he happens to know all this," said Melanie, alternately sipping her tea and playing with her spoon, "I have only to tell you, that he was here in this room screened by that ivy."

"A listener!" said Cyrilla, contemptuously; "I did not imagine that possible."

"If you consider for a moment, Cyrilla, you will scarcely blame him: he assured me, however, his intention was to have taken advantage of the opportunity for an explanation, which you must yourself acknowledge is now unavoidable."

"The sooner the better," said Cyrilla. "I hope you have prepared him for what he must hear. It would prevent a scene, and be pleasanter for all parties."

"That is more easily said than done. I had trouble enough to pacify him about that boy, and endeavoured to make him ashamed of himself by saying, I should rather have expected him to laugh than be angry at anything so preposterous."

"You would not have laughed had you been present," said Cyrilla; "he was very much in earnest."

"I dare say he was.....boys always are, and I am very sorry for him, poor fellow; but we have some one else to talk of just now. I wish you had had some screen, and could have overheard....."

Klemmhein reminded the speakers of his presence by again presenting his tray.

"No more, thank you," said Melanie, slightly waving her hand. "You may go now.....or, stay.....I think the rain has cooled the air extremely.....bring some wood and light the fire."

Klemmhein was stormed with questions when he returned to the billiard-room.

"I told you," observed Rupert, "they would not look at you. I shouldn't be surprised to hear that they altogether forgot your presence."

"Precisely," said Klemmhein; "they seemed to consider me a sort of machine, a thing without eyes or ears, and consequently talked in a way that has excited my curiosity sufficiently to make me disposed to try to light a fire for them, in order to hear a little more."

"Did they really forget you were in the room?" asked Rupert.

"Not exactly, for they mentioned no names; and I reminded them of my vicinity when I thought I was hearing more than they might desire of some one who had been concealed behind a screen, and a boy who was very much in earnest."

"I don't find anything particularly interesting in that," said Rupert. "I would not walk across

the hall, still less light a fire, to hear about either the one or the other."

"Nor I, perhaps, if I did not suspect the boy might be your cousin of Waldenburg, and he who heard behind the ivy what he did not like to hear" He stopped and looked towards Lindesmar, who was gloomily sitting at a window watching the large drops of rain coursing each other down the panes of glass.

A couple of young officers laughed without knowing why, and encouraged Klemmhein to light the fire and hear the end of the story. A few minutes afterwards he was standing before the grateless fireplace, into which, however, he carelessly threw the wood on perceiving that the apartment was deserted. Cyrilla was gone, and Zorndorff, walking up and down the adjoining room, spoke to Melanie in a low vehement manner. "Not a day," he said, "not an hour.....my uncle must speak to her—she will attend to him at least for me she has no sort of consideration—seems to consider it something meritorious being implacable."

"Edouard!"

"I wish you were back again in Exfort," he continued, with increasing irritation, as the sound of Klemmhein's entrance and noisy proceedings reached them; "it is one of the peculiarities of this house that, notwithstanding the unusual number of rooms in use, one never can be free from interrup-

tion for five minutes. That new fashion of having the doors to slide into the walls, and substituting curtains, is an intolerable nuisance. There may be some one listening to us now, and hearing a secret which, strange to say, continues one, though known to four persons—a fifth, however, without our strong personal interest to ensure secrecy, might be dangerous, so.....”

Klemmhein had heard only the last few words ; but they proved so clearly that something had been said which might cause embarrassment, that he did not choose to await recognition or attempt explanation. On hearing the sound of quick approaching steps he made a bound towards Rupert’s study, entered it, closed the door with some violence, and escaped by the back staircase.

“We have been overheard,” began Zorndorff.

“No,” replied Melanie, “it was only a servant. I heard him enter but a moment ago, probably to light the fire as I desired—the few words he may have heard will be perfectly unintelligible to him servants never understand.....”

“Excuse me,” said Zorndorff; “they understand and observe a great deal more than any other class of people. Our frequent forgetfulness of their presence, the silence and restraint imposed on them by ours, alike tend to concentrate their thoughts on us, and call forth and improve their powers of observation in an unusual degree ; while want of education, and grossness of ideas, make them the most dangerous

and prejudiced judges of our actions. I detest servants, and have only been able to find one partially trustworthy."

"You mean your present housekeeper, Rickey?"

"Yes; I may depend on her, I believe; she is honest and—silent."

"But I thought," said Melanie, "you were about to lose her. Is she not to be married to our porter?"

"I shall find means to prevent that for some time to come," answered Zorndorff. "There are few who can altogether dispense with the services of an humble friend; and I may want one now that the most important epoch of my life has arrived."

"Take care," observed Melanie, "that your interference on an occasion of this kind does not turn your humble friend into an humble foe."

"I have thought of that," said Zorndorff, "and resolved not to oppose her openly. My uncle must create difficulties and raise objections—and for this purpose I have pointed out to him the discomfort of having married servants in very strong terms. This Rickey is the only one on whom I can place the smallest reliance, and I must retain her this year at least in my service."

"And when this year is ended is the threatened danger past?" asked Melanie.

"*He* said so," answered Zorndorff, musingly;

“and any doubts I may have entertained of his power of prediction must yield to the literal fulfilment of all his words. He promised years of quietude after this. It seemed as if I were to give up my profession and retire into the country..... I can do so now.....and why should I not?”

“Why not, indeed?” cried Melanie. “You have hitherto endeavoured but too exactly to fulfil your destiny—why not now leave Exfort, and avoid the danger of which you have so strong a presentiment?”

“I dare not leave Cyrilla while Adlerkron is here—he it is whose destiny has ever crossed mine; from him I must expect constant opposition; and even though Cyrilla may never return his affection, I *know* that he has sufficient influence to poison her mind against me, and incite her to treat me with an indifference a thousand times more intolerable than the most openly expressed displeasure.”

“With feelings towards Rupert such as yours,” said Melanie, hesitatingly, “I should imagine you must be anxious to leave his house as soon as possible.”

“Undoubtedly,” he answered, “and nothing but dire necessity could have induced me to stay here so long. I have lately, however, begun to think my illness rather fortunate than otherwise, as my presence here has been an evident restraint on Cyrilla, and perhaps prevented her from confessing all to him.”

“ She will never do that,” said Melanie, decidedly.

“ She has already spoken of a *promise*,” said Zorndorff, “ and might easily become more explicit, in order to prevent him from thinking her capricious or insensible to his attentions.”

“ For all our sakes, she will be silent,” said Melanie, earnestly ; “ and for her own too, poor dear ; for I regret to say, Edouard, her fear of you is now so great, that even the possibility of being condemned to live with you would alone ensure her silence for ever.”

“ I cannot, will not, believe that,” cried Zorndorff, impetuously ; “ nor do you either.”

“ I must,” replied Melanie, “ for Cyrilla has said it too often and seriously to admit of a doubt ; besides all her actions confirm her words. Have you not observed the calm resignation of her manner lately ? ”

“ No ! ” said Zorndorff, harshly ; “ her present life is one continued struggle, which will kill her if it last much longer.”

“ And you see that, and feel no remorse—have no thought of relenting ? ”

“ If by relenting you mean resigning—never ! ”

“ Then,” said Melanie, “ my advice to both is now an immediate and total separation for some years. I want her to go to Italy, to Fernanda.”

“ She shall not,” cried Zorndorff.

“ I—thought—in such matters she was perfectly at liberty.”

“ Yes—so she is—of course.....Yes, she may go—but no one can prevent me from following her ; and from this time forward she must accustom herself to see me incessantly beside her. Our agreement neither imposes absence nor silence on me, and with time and opportunity, it will be very odd if I cannot win a woman who has already solemnly vowed to be mine for life ! ”

The sound of an approaching carriage drew him to the window, whence, catching a glimpse of the President as he drove up to the house, he hurried down stairs to meet him, leaving Melanie to the vain regrets and incessant anxiety which had latterly become so oppressive to her, that she had lost all interest in her usual occupations, and thought of nothing but a flight to Italy, as the only means of escape left for her and her sister. Should Zorn-dorff follow them, as he had just threatened, there was but little chance of Cyrilla's recovering either health or cheerfulness. She herself, too, began to feel a sort of indefinite dread of her nephew, that made his presence anything but agreeable to her ; and she almost resolved that, the Alps once between her and the President, she would write to him and confess a secret which had placed them in the power of one who seemed resolved to be as tyrannical as he had been unscrupulous. Mentally, the letter

was composed; and the excuses offered for her own conduct naturally brought her to meditations on Zorndorff's. How had he disappointed her expectations! How completely convinced her that romantic situations in real life were more likely to be painful than pleasing! So completely had he shaken her faith in ideal love, that she felt forced to admit that men were egotistical beings, incapable of feeling or even understanding that sublime love, thoroughly refined from the dross of selfishness and interest, that had been the subject of her youthful poetical dreams. But no—there were exceptions; rare indeed; yet even her own experience furnished one: and, quick as lightning, her thoughts went back full fifteen years, and the object of her first and as she still firmly believed only love, rose before her.—Again they sat together and mourned over their hard fate.—Again she made the magnanimous offer of braving her stepmother, her father, and all the world;—of telling Count Falkenstein that she hated him—and of waiting until Valentin had a home to offer her; no matter how humble, it would be a paradise with him!—And then she heard his words of ardent gratitude and admiration at such disinterestedness;—saw the struggle—the effort it cost to enable him to refuse the sacrifice; but he had done so—nobly—and without reserve—not even accepting the vows of eternal love she so profusely proffered.—With a tyranny, of which she had only become fully conscious at a later period,

she had insisted on his remaining near her, and being present when she obeyed what she chose to call his commands.—This, too, he had done; and the certainty of mutual sympathy, in the fullest extent of the word, had supported both through the most trying hours of their lives.

Since that time no chance or change had brought them together; but now she was in daily, hourly expectation of a meeting. He was coming to see his children before their return to school—coming to give Rupert advice about his Vehn colony, his church, and schoolhouse. She had heard him much spoken of lately; had herself joined in the conversation. But when Rupert now joyously entered the room, and desired her to guess who had come from Exfort with the President, her heart beat violently, even while she answered with apparent composure, “Mr Englmann, most probably;” and then she looked towards the door.

“O,” said Rupert, “you will have time enough to prepare a little speech for him; he is so tired after having been all night in the mail, that he intends to take a bath and rest before dinner. We shall have a tolerably large party to-day—Arnheim, Stauffen, and some others, came here to fish; but the weather compelled them to play billiards; and they now intend to dine with us. Klemmheim expected to meet the Bellegardes, and that he may not be disappointed, I have just sent off to Neuhoof to invite them; they will be sure to come, as you know

they are always bored to death at home on a day of this kind."

Melanie was glad that their party had increased. She thought the expected interview would be less painful before witnesses—and.....retired to her room to dress and prepare for it.

Most carefully she chose her gravest coloured robe. Most solemnly she covered with choicest old lace, formed to represent a cap, her shining black hair. Unconsciously, she wished to appear less worldly, in both dress and manners, than she supposed Englmann expected to find her; and yet a latent desire to please, perhaps surprise by her still remarkable beauty, was uppermost in her mind, as she walked towards the drawing-room, whence the humming sound of many voices told her she was as late as she that day intended to be.

The Bellegardes gathered round her—the officers from Exfort spoke of their frustrated plans—Klemmhein related how he had been playing at masquerade, and how mortified he had been at not having obtained a single glance from her Excellency, &c. &c. &c.; and Melanie answered and smiled, while her eyes furtively wandered to a table covered with maps and books, where the President and Englmann were standing, apparently discussing some very interesting topic. Somewhat offended to find that the latter could talk and care about roads and plantations when he expected to see her, the palpitations of her heart ceased by degrees;

she waited sufficiently long to convince him that she too was indifferent; and it was a fact, that as she at length walked across the room, she actually felt very nearly as calm and unconcerned as she looked. — What Englmann felt or thought, it would have been hard to conjecture; he bowed over the proffered hand, spoke quietly of the quarter of a life that had intervened since they had last met, and then endeavoured to repress the more violent than graceful demonstrations of affection bestowed on him by his two children. And Melanie put her hand on Tina's head, and spoke of her, and of the education of children in general, and girls in particular, wondering at herself and at him, and greatly inclined to ask, "Can such things be?"

They can—and it is better that it is so. Fifteen years spent in the conscientious fulfilment of those domestic duties from which no station in life is exempted, will, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, extinguish the most flaming first love that ever burned on the altar of disinterestedness.

Melanie gazed with melancholy earnestness on the voluminous white neckcloth; the long uncurled hair, combed back from the calm but careworn face before her; and then—then—the fantastic little flickering flame she had so fondly fed with poetry and moonlight meditations for years, was—quenched for ever.

"Such, such is life!" she observed to Cyrilla, as they separated for the night. "I may be, as you

say, a more contented woman henceforward, but for me the romance of life has ended ; the pleasing sorrow that inspired my verse is gone for ever ! Content is death to poesy."

" Perhaps so," answered Cyrilla ; " but it is health of mind—it is happiness—and I cannot pity you for having gained it, even at the price of all your 'pleasing sorrows,' and poetical inspirations."

CHAPTER X.

THE sun shone brightly into the breakfast-room the next morning; but lighted no cheerful faces, save those of Englmann and his two children. They laughed and talked together, unconscious of all that was being enacted around them; and had not Cyrilla been greatly pre-occupied, their gaiety would certainly have attracted her from the window, where she had stood so long, and silently following with anxious eyes the figures of Rupert and Conrad, as they walked together before the house, forgetful of time, and heedless of the but half suppressed yawns of the superlatively well-dressed French valet who leaned so gracefully against a pillar of the portico, or the fiery impatient glances of the bearded chasseur, who had stood more than three quarters of an hour beside the open door of the well-appointed travelling carriage.

At length the cousins approached Cyrilla, and making a sign to her to lean a little out of the

window, Conrad said, in a low voice, "Will you allow me, as relation or friend, to give an opinion concerning your affairs, and offer you advice?"

"Most gladly," answered Cyrilla, blushing a good deal, while she glanced inquiringly towards Rupert.

"From what I have just heard," continued Conrad, with grave solicitude, "it has become evident to me, as well as Rupert, that some ungentleman-like advantage is being taken of your want of knowledge of common law. A promise such as you suppose you have made is an impossibility."

"You have said more than I permitted," she observed, turning reproachfully to Rupert.

"My dear Cyrilla, you could not expect me to let Conrad leave Freilands under the impression that I was acting as he supposed."

"Do not regret the confidence he has placed in me," interposed Conrad, quickly; "rather let me use it to make myself useful. It must be evident to you that Rupert is too much personally concerned and interested in this affair to discuss it with Count Zorndorff as rationally and dispassionately as is desirable.....May I hope that you will employ me for this purpose? One word, and I remain here to insist on your being released from such unjust thralldom."

"Thank you a thousand times, dear Conrad," said Cyrilla, extending her hand towards him, while tears started to her eyes; "I understand all

the generosity of your offer, but.....I.....cannot accept it."

"You will not?"

"I dare not."

"Then," said Conrad, coming closer, and speaking in a whisper; "let me at least advise you to leave Exfort, and get out of the reach of that handsome tyrant as soon as you can."

"Even that will be more difficult than you suppose," answered Cyrilla, with a forced smile.

"You think he will follow you?"

She seemed unwilling or unable to answer.

"Come to Waldenburg all of you.....he will scarcely besiege a castle in the Carpathians, with moat and tower still in good preservation."

"The President is going to Aix-la-Chapelle..." began Cyrilla.

"So much the better: then I can have you and Melanie without him, perhaps?"

Cyrilla raised herself from her stooping position. "No, Conrad, she said, with a melancholy smile; "there is not the slightest chance of such an arrangement being made, nor could I even propose it."

"I may expect you at least," he said, turning to Rupert, and vainly endeavouring to conceal his disappointment; "the first use you will make of your liberty will, I hope, be....."

"To inspect your fortress," said Rupert. "You may expect me about the end of September."

"And in the meantime, Rupert, don't despise

my advice because I happen to be a couple of years younger than you are. Keep clear of the Viscountess."

"I will," said Rupert, good-humouredly.

"It would have been well for me," said Conrad, as he turned from Cyrilla, and with bent down head walked towards the hall door; "it would have been well for me if I had not let myself be persuaded to come here."

"Don't say that," cried Rupert, warmly; "for if you had not come we should have been strangers still, whereas now, I trust, we are friends for life."

"I am so very sorry to leave you all," said Conrad, greatly ashamed of what he supposed an absurd weakness.

"Then why don't you stay here?"

"Because I made a fool of myself yesterday, and everything is changed now. Adieu!"

He sprang into the carriage, the door of which was closed with a sounding jerk that made the horses prick up their ears, the postilions vault into their saddles, the valet clamber monkey-like to his place, followed with more dignity, but equal haste, by the chasseur; and a moment after they swept past the windows of the breakfast-room, where a number of loiterers were now collected. The President and Zorndorff were not among them—they had long been standing apart, perhaps too evidently waiting for the dispersion of the party. A look of intelligence passed between Virginie and

the latter—she raised little Alphonse in her arms, and, with an unusually benign smile, proposed taking the two other children with her to Neuhof, “to play with Hortense and Josephine.”

The invitation did not seem to give much pleasure; they hung on their father’s arms, and begged to go with him; and when he said that he and Rupert would be too much occupied to attend to them, they turned imploringly to Cyrilla.

“I am sorry that I cannot walk with you to-day,” she said, “as I have a long letter to write; but if you go to Neuhof, I promise to meet you at the ford when you are returning home.”

“I intended to have kept them until after the children’s dinner,” began Virginie, “that is.....if Mr Englmann will permit.....”

“O, no, no, no,” they both cried eagerly; “you will find us at the ford if you will only go there at twelve o’clock.”

Cyrilla smiled, and then whispered to Tina, “Play with little Alphonse to-day, and don’t shock the Bellegardes with unnecessary gymnastics.”

The little girl looked up inquiringly.

“I mean, don’t climb the apple-trees, or run races with Jérôme or Lucian.”

Tina nodded her head two or three times, with an expression of great intelligence in her little bright eyes, and then followed Virginie out of the room.

The President looked at his watch with dignified

thoughtfulness, murmured something about having ten or fifteen minutes to spare as he dropped it into his waistcoat pocket; and then turning to Cyrilla in a grave business-like sort of way, requested to speak to her alone for a few minutes in the next room.

She did surmise, she knew what she was about to hear; but, like most women, her imagination was both fertile and vivid, and had already furnished her with so many painful interviews with the President, that the reality fell far short of the supposition, and the courage and determination which she took with her was more than sufficient for the occasion. She sat down on the offered chair with a half-suppressed sigh of resignation, and if the first question was startling, she was at least prepared to answer it.

“Without your mistaking my motive for mere vulgar curiosity, Cyrilla, may I ask if you are engaged to your cousin, Rupert?”

“I am not.”

“But a few days ago,” he continued, “I should have heard this answer with great regret: I ought now to rejoice at it, yet I find it impossible to do so.”

Cyrilla demanded no explanation of these words, and, much surprised at her composure, he added; “It is your own wish of course that it is so?”

“Yes,” she answered, drawing in her breath

quickly ; “ circumstances have made it very probable that I shall never enter into any engagement.”

“ With him ? Then, after all, my nephew may be right, though for my part I doubted his having the slightest chance. That unpleasant explanation at Spa, and his subsequent marriage, were not I supposed likely to be forgotten or forgiven so quickly, and.....”

Cyrilla interrupted him with the assurance that she was very glad to find his opinion coincided so exactly with her own.

“ I am but a bungler in affairs of this kind,” said the President, “ and ought not to have referred to that day at Spa when I intended to plead Edouard’s cause for him ; but the fact is, had I not been present then, I could not have been aware of the motives which now induce him, notwithstanding the recent death of his wife, to seize the earliest opportunity of showing his desire to atone for conduct so criminal as he acknowledges his to have been on that occasion.”

Uninterrupted by Cyrilla, the President enlarged on this topic for a considerable time ; but when he allowed her to perceive that Zorndorff entertained no doubts of ultimate success—expected that she would, in the course of the ensuing year, pardon if not forget the past, and bestow her hand on him, nay even now required a promise to that effect, her anger overcame all other feelings, and with a

fluency which afterwards astonished herself, she altogether declined the proposed alliance, and begged never to hear it mentioned again.

"Have you well considered what you are doing, Cyrilla?" asked the President very seriously.

"Yes," she answered, rising; "you cannot suppose me in the least surprised at what you have said—I expected to hear it, not just yet, perhaps, but the sooner your nephew is now made acquainted with my unalterable decision the better."

"Your 'unalterable decision!'" repeated the President, with a slightly ironical smile, as his eyes followed the youthful figure retreating towards the door. "That sounds well, but means nothing, Cyrilla. Listen to me.....There is nothing unalterable in this world. As well might we hope to stop the course of time as the progress of change: it is incessant, not alone in things and persons, but in minds also. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, these changes take place, and are only known to us by their effects, or felt from the manner in which they influence our actions." He paused, and then added, gravely—"Will you not defer your final answer, and try what change a year may make in your ideas on this very important subject?"

Cyrilla had stopped, scarcely knowing whether to feel annoyed or amused at the calm answer to her rather vehement speech. He seemed to think that she was wavering already in her "unalterable decision," and perhaps intended to confirm any

prudent consideration that might have arisen, when he added—"If you are not likely to enter into an engagement with Rupert, Edouard's proposal is worthy of at least some months' consideration. He is now in every respect a most eligible *parti*, and is as much attached to you as any woman could desire—more so, in fact, than is conducive to happiness—for he seems extravagantly jealous, without a shadow of cause that I can discover."

A painful feeling of consciousness suffused Cyrilla's face with a deep blush:—a moment afterwards, the fear that Zorndorff might at last have discovered her preference for Rupert made her so pale, that even the President observed it. He fixed his keen gray eyes on her, and said slowly—"Can it be possible that, with the choice of two such men as Edouard and Rupert, you think of throwing yourself away on Count Lindesmar?"

"O, no," she answered, greatly relieved to perceive that Rupert had not been referred to; "I.....I.....merely wish to remain as I am for a few years longer."

The President looked perplexed for a moment. "I believe," he said, turning to the door of the breakfast-room, "I believe it would be better if Edouard spoke to you himself."

But Cyrilla did not feel disposed for further explanations; and the moment the President left the room, she opened the door near which she was

standing, and ran up the stairs to Rupert's study with such eager haste, that when there she could scarcely articulate.

Englmann had been looking over some plans and estimates of school-houses with him. They both turned round, rather surprised.

"Rupert.....let me go.....with you.....to.....the marsh to-day.....You must take me.....I shall be as little troublesome as possible."

"We shall be only too happy to have you with us," cried Rupert; "but put on very strong boots, for after yesterday's rain some of the fields will be half under water."

To this direction she paid no attention, but waited to descend the stairs with him, and when in the hall sent for her bonnet and gloves. While they were still standing at the foot of the staircase, the President came out of the breakfast-room, followed by Zorndorff in a state of such exasperation that all his efforts were insufficient effectually to conceal it. He whispered a few words to his uncle, as they walked to the hall-door together, and then turned round and frowningly watched Cyrilla, who, with nervous haste, tied on her garden bonnet, and sent some scarcely intelligible message to her sister—hurrying past him even while still speaking.

"Cyrilla," cried Rupert, following her, "you cannot cross the fields if you do not put on the boots you had made on purpose for the marsh."

There is plenty of time still—we are not in any hurry.”

“But I am,” said Cyrilla, walking quickly on. “I want to get away from *him*,” she added, in a low voice. “Perhaps he may return to Exfort with the President, and let us enjoy our remaining time at Freilands in peace and happiness.”

“Oh! you have had an explanation at last?”

“Not with him—it was the President who spoke to me. But as he will not hesitate to repeat all I said, I may hope to hear no more about this matter for some time at least.”

“But you are still bound by your promise? still unable to bestow a kind word or look on me when he is present?”

“He cannot always be present,” said Cyrilla, with a deep sigh.

“In his uncle’s house at least he will seldom be absent, and it is there I must see you in future.”

Cyrilla was silent; and the Vicar, observing that they had ceased to speak, walked on beside them, and was soon engaged in conversation with Rupert on the endless subject of parishioners and parish duties.

Half provoked with her cousin for feeling an interest just then in such details, Cyrilla moved on alone,—at last so completely wrapped up in her own thoughts that she ceased altogether to hear the voices of her companions. She was not quite sure that she had acted wisely in avoiding an interview

with Zorndorff—perhaps she ought to have made one more appeal to his generosity,—but after what Melanie had told her, how could she expect anything but disappointment? No, she must trust to time,—must wait until he himself proposed to act as she had so often in vain implored him to do. The President had said that time of itself brought change, and he was right. What had not three years done for her? what might not three more do for Zorndorff?

At the lake they found the fisher and his son lazily stretched in Rupert's wherry: they both started up, and began to arrange the seats.

"Bring out the new boat with the awning," said Rupert. "I don't intend to row to-day."

"What a luxurious amusement boating is!" observed Englmann, throwing himself back on the cushions with an easy negligence that rather oddly contrasted with the formality of his dress. "I used to wish that Windhorst possessed a lake or river, but now I am glad it has neither. The temptation to idleness would have been irresistible, and I might have still longer continued to indulge in reveries and regrets which ought to have no place in the mind of a Christian minister."

"If that be the case," said Rupert, "I consider it a fortunate circumstance that Windhorst has only a fish-pond. To me a lake brings all sorts of pleasant recollections—reminds me of our vacation-

journeys—of Como, Maggiore, even the Mediterranean itself.”

“And who,” said Englmann, enthusiastically, “who could see this cloudless sky, those sunbeams quivering on the long expanse of water, without recalling such scenes, if they had ever been offered to his youthful eyes, or helped to inflame his boyish imagination !”

Cyrilla’s train of thought was broken: she looked up and began to think it possible that the Vicar, when a score of years younger, might have resembled in some degree the portraits so often drawn of him by Melanie. The eyes of which she had heard so much were certainly of the heavenly blue of the sky above them, and there was something visionary in their upturned expression that involuntarily interested her. Unconscious of her observation, he continued: “Those were pleasant journeys, Rupert—days of innocent vanity; we scarcely felt the difference of our ages then.”

“Not at all,” said Rupert, bending forward to see if it were time to steer for the river. “You were the pleasantest companion possible; and if it had not been for an occasional quotation of Greek or Latin, I should have quite forgotten you were my tutor.”

“I am afraid it escaped my memory, too, oftener than it ought,” rejoined Englmann, smiling. “Do you remember that time at Como, where the English

family supposed me to be your elder brother, and were so very civil to us?"

"Perfectly," answered Rupert, laughing. "They discovered some likeness between me and a fair-haired midshipman, a son of theirs, who by all accounts must have been a still more restless animal than I was. I thought they would never stop shaking our hands, and for my part was in a state of considerable alarm lest the mamma, in a fit of enthusiasm, might be tempted to give me a kiss! At that time I should have resented such a liberty as quite derogatory to my dignity, and I did not at all like having my curls pushed off my forehead, or a hand placed on my shoulder, even by a handsome woman; whereas now, I could submit to caresses of the kind with a very good grace, though but bestowed on me by the stout mother of an unruly midshipman."

Cyrilla smiled. Englmann seemed to be recalling the time more distinctly to his memory. "Yes..... they were very polite indeed.....invited us to visit them in England.....but," he added, with a slightly contemptuous smile, "but they thought I was Baron Adlerkron of Windhorst—supposed me the possessor of your handsome travelling-carriage—saw that our arrival created some sensation, and must have observed the exemplary patience with which the people at the hotel submitted to the nuisance of having the puppies you brought from St Bernhard running all over the house."

“ And very well behaved puppies they were,” said Rupert, “ until the day they got hold of the Englishwoman’s bonnet and feathers. Do you recollect their rushing into our rooms, scampering about for a few seconds, and then depositing the mangled spoils at our feet, wagging their tails and looking up for the approbation I did not dare to show because you were present. Those blue feathers nearly choked me as well as the dogs. I never laughed so immoderately in all my life ; and I think, too, you were amused, though you thought it necessary to look grave.”

“ You forget,” said Englmann, smiling, “ that all the apologies and excuses which were necessary on the occasion fell to my share. I never was so provoked in my life ; we could not pay for the damage done, or replace the bonnet, or do anything but offer regrets.”

“ We made some offering of that kind wherever we went,” said Rupert. “ I certainly was a most troublesome boy ; but I flatter myself I made up for my juvenile misconduct when, at a later period, we commenced our pedestrian tours. How I enjoyed our wanderings in Tyrol, with straw hats on our heads and knapsacks on our shoulders ! Those expeditions elicited the only sparks of poetry in my nature.....I wrote verses then, did n’t I, Englmann ? Wild effusions befitting my age and education.”

“ I remember,” he answered ; “ they were all of

a more martial than sentimental description. You were always looking for sites whereon to build impregnable castles, and I trying to discover a nook suitable for the modest edifice, the possession of which would at that time have made me so immeasurably happy."

"That was the dreamy part of your life," said Rupert; "it did not last long."

"Dreams never do; they are supposed only to occupy the moments immediately before waking; but they sometimes make a deep impression, nevertheless; and those to which you allude caused me to take a step that has influenced my whole life." Not aware of being understood by Cyrilla, he continued, "The wish to have a home to offer to one who would have been an excuse for any other act of thoughtlessness, induced me, without proper reflection, to choose the church as my profession—I should rather say my means of subsistence."

"But," said Rupert, "I never imagined that you did so unwillingly."

"No; I did it willingly, gladly; but my motives were not what they ought to have been. When obliged to resign the being I had so idolized, the fulfilment of my religious duties became a toil to me—my humble dwelling, without the beautiful companion I had hoped would have shared it with me, appeared mean and wretched; in short, I saw the falseness of my position, saw my error

when too late, and felt that not only the pomps and vanities of this life had still strong hold on me, but that my natural temperament struggled stubbornly against the restraint imposed on words and actions."

"You judge your motives and yourself with too much severity," said Rupert. "How many others have entered the church in the same way without any of the scruples and repentant humility which you experienced!"

"I trust not many," rejoined Englmann: "no one should choose that profession without having the most decided preference or actual vocation for it: negligence in any other is mere personal worldly loss; but a Christian minister who neglects or is even indifferent in the performance of his duties, endangers not only his own welfare here and hereafter, but that of hundreds of others who naturally look to him for example and instruction."

"My dear Englmann," cried Rupert, "you are talking as if you had been the most worthless of men. Allow me at least to inform my cousin that you are by many degrees the most pious and exemplary vicar that ever the village of Windhorst has possessed."

"I have at least endeavoured to fulfil my duties faithfully," said Englmann, quietly, "and have been rewarded in a way I hardly dared to expect. I am now contented beyond my hopes, and happy beyond my deserts; but not knowing or wishing to

try how far I could bear temptation, and being quite convinced that, instead of seeking, I must ever avoid the excitements of society, I find your house much too gay for me, Rupert, and if you have no objection, I shall leave it to-morrow or the day after."

"I have the greatest possible objection," answered Rupert, "and insist on your remaining, were it only to convince Cyrilla that you are not the weak wavering character you have represented yourself to be."

"Avoiding temptation is not weakness," said Englmann.

"But I cannot see even a shadow of temptation for you at Freilands," persisted Rupert.

"Because you don't know my weaknesses, and have not the least idea how I still value the luxuries and enjoy the elegancies of life—how very soon they could again become indispensable to me! The years passed with you, and the habits acquired in your uncle's house, have caused me more suffering than you can ever imagine; but, putting myself out of the question, you surely must perceive that, in a house so constantly full of young and gay people as Freilands, I seem, with my reserved manners and peculiar dress, only placed among them like the veiled skeleton at an Egyptian banquet, to call to remembrance what they would all rather forget."

"Perhaps it would be as well if some of them were occasionally subject to a little restraint," said

Rupert ; “ but as to the peculiarity of your dress, you must allow me to say, that you carry it to excess now. The long hair is something quite new, and not at all necessary.”

“ I consider it advantageous to remind others, and through them myself, of my vocation.”

“ But I assure you, Englmann, if such a dress were *de rigueur*, it would be enough to deter many young men from taking orders.”

“ Those who could be deterred, by *any* peculiarity of dress, from undertaking so sacred an office, had better turn their thoughts to something else.”

“ You may be right,” said Rupert ; “ the dress would not have influenced me ; but I believe I should have avoided all extremes, all pedantry, as I now do everything that in any way borders on foppery.”

This remark seemed to strike Englmann : Rupert forgot it the moment the words passed his lips. They had turned up the river, and were rowing against its scarcely perceptible current : the banks at first, shaded to the water’s edge by fine old trees, afforded a pleasant gloom after the glare of the lake ; for even a cloudless sky and the brightest sunbeams pall on the senses when long enjoyed, and change, even apparently for the worse, is as necessary to us as shade to a picture. The scene was new to Englmann, and he stood up and listened with interest as Rupert explained his plans,

pointed to his already reclaimed land, and rejoiced in the growth of his young plantations. By degrees the latter began to dwindle into rather scraggy specimens of marsh-pine, dwarf birch, and stunted shrubs, intermingled with large patches of heath; and soon after an apparently endless expanse of brown and purple bog lay before them, the river widened, and the boat glided easily into the waveless shallow waters of a dark-coloured lake, the shores of which were disfigured by an over-luxuriant crop of reeds and bulrushes.

“Is this the source of the river?” asked Englmann.

“No; the springs, as many of them as we could discover, are further on, where there is another lake even more desolate-looking than this. Here, at least, I have some high ground for my village: the Vehn colonists, you know, are to build beside the road and canals that are to be made through the bog.”

“Cyrilla,” said Rupert, as they stood on the landing-place and looked round them, “you cannot cross these fields to-day, and this is rather a melancholy spot to leave you in.....suppose you were to row up to the last lake.”

“Which is still more dreary,” said Cyrilla, smiling. “No, I shall sit quietly under the three pollards until you return: it is not the first time I have done so.”

“But you have no book, or any thing to amuse you.....”

“I do not want amusement. Tell the old fisherman to remain in the boat, and if I get tired of being here, I can go on the lake and look for aquatic plants: so pray do not return a moment sooner than you like on my account.

CHAPTER XI.

CYRILLA walked towards the pollards. They were but a few yards distant, and stood alone, hideous, yet picturesque; for, strange to say, the last epithet cannot be denied them, so frequently have they been chosen by landscape painters as studies, or to furnish a foreground if not actual picture, with their thin foliage and deformed trunks. Half kneeling on the seat beneath one of them, Cyrilla watched her cousin and his companion, until they disappeared behind the osier-planted dike that fenced the meadows from the encroachments of the water, and then collecting various marsh-plants, she wandered towards the lake, and perceived with great satisfaction that the fisherman, overpowered by heat and recent exertion, was already enjoying a sound sleep in the boat.

The silence of a midsummer noon was around her, and the winged part of the insect world alone seeming fully to enjoy and seek the shadeless heat, buzzed and hummed over the numerous slimy

pools of stagnant water in ceaseless inexplicable activity, or with unsullied feet stalked airily on the oozy green surface, until disturbed by some spotted frog that, suddenly rising, spread destruction and terror around him, when darting with gaping mouth and outstretched legs across the pigmean domain.

Dragon and butter flies hovered above the sedges, and over the sleeping old man; and it was when following their vagrant flights, that Cyrilla observed something dark moving along the course of the river. A few moments' observation convinced her that it was a small boat, and her beating heart told her, long before the outline of the figure became distinct, that the solitary man in it was Zorndorff. Notwithstanding his physician's injunctions that he should avoid violent exercise, he was rowing so energetically, that the little wherry darted through the water with astonishing velocity; and once on the lake, a very few pulls brought him so near the shore that, when at last he paused and looked up, he at once perceived Cyrilla on the bank motionless—expectant.

Whatever thoughts of escape she may have momentarily entertained, none became apparent; and though Zorndorff had known that the rain of the previous day would make the low meadows impassable for her, and had expected to find her nearly where she was, there was so much self-possession, if not resolution, in the erectness of her figure and

lightly folded arms, that it caused a sudden and complete change in his feelings and plans. He had followed her in a state of fierce anger, determined to be inexorable—to insist—threaten—intimidate her; and now, more than appeased by her evident willingness to meet him, and half dreading her displeasure, he rowed slowly forward, meditating forms of expostulation and words of entreaty.

As his boat ran alongside of the other, the fisherman raised himself on his elbow, and stared drowsily round him. Zorndorff, with an urbanity not common to him, requested he would not disturb himself—he did not want any assistance—hoped he should be able to overtake Baron Adlerkron, and then sprang up the bank, heedless of the old man's answer, and only intent on having the reeds and rushes between them as soon as possible.

Cyrilla waited until he had joined her, and then led the way to the seat beneath the pollards.

A dead silence ensued.

Zorndorff flung his straw-hat on the ground, and passed his handkerchief several times across his forehead. He wished her to speak, but she sat down silently—her downcast eyes effectually concealing her fears from his inquiring glances.

“You will scarcely be surprised at my asking for some explanation of what you said to my uncle this morning, Cyrilla?”

“I thought I had been sufficiently explicit,” she answered, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Why, yes.....under any other circumstances but you forget that I have a right to a different kind of answer now."

"I rely upon your written promise, and abide by my answer."

"But do you think that, without a gleam of hope, I can go on for ever enduring the restraint and jealousy you have made me suffer lately?" asked Zorndorff, with ill-concealed irritation, as he sat down beside her.

A bitter sarcasm trembled on Cyrilla's lips. She did not give it utterance, but the sudden movement, indignant look, half-opened mouth—and then the listless sinking back against the tree, were too expressive to be misunderstood; and Zorndorff, after a moment's hesitation, in low eager words of entreaty, begged her to forgive the past and believe in his sincere repentance. He would submit to any trial, wait any length of time, on condition that she would put an end to the hopes of Lindesmar, and whoever else aspired to her favour, by openly acknowledging, or allowing it to be understood, that she was engaged to him.

"Margaret is not yet three months in her grave " began Cyrilla.

"Pshaw!" he cried impetuously, "I do not want you to proclaim it to the world. I only ask you to speak to me, look at me, distinguish me, a little more than any one else.....only just enough to let people suppose.....O, Cyrilla, you want no

instruction on these subjects. I never saw any woman who could show a preference more charmingly than you can."

"It is rather difficult to conceal where it exists," she answered; "but I no longer feel, and will not feign it."

"What!" he exclaimed. "Have I heard you rightly? Say that over again."

Cyrilla repeated her words distinctly, adding, that she hoped they might induce him to consent to at least constant separation—the only favour she would henceforward request of him; and she trusted that time would make the tie that connected them as irksome to him as it had long been to her.

Utterly hopeless of moving him, and rendered desperate by her wretchedness, there was a decision in her manner so new to Zorndorff, that he gazed at her in astonishment for some moments; and then the possibility that he had tried her affection and patience quite beyond endurance began at last to enter his mind—the mere idea of renewed separation making her dearer to him than ever. He reasoned, expostulated, and entreated, with an ardour and earnestness that could not have been heard unmoved, had she become merely indifferent to him; but fear and aversion were working so strongly within her, that though she partly succeeded in concealing the former, the latter was so perfectly evident, as she drew back with a shudder when he attempted to put his arm round

her, that he stood up, and making a violent effort to appear composed, said slowly,—

“You seem altogether to forget our relation to each other.....remember that no barrier now exists between us.”

“I trust there is still an insuperable one,” said Cyrilla—“your own interest. You are not likely to proclaim yourself a bigamist, or resign your wife’s fortune for a woman who has altogether ceased to care for you.”

“For that last contingency I have sedulously provided by remittances to America,” he answered, calmly; “and once there, Cyrilla, I shall concern myself very little about my reputation here.”

This answer overwhelmed her, and it was long before she could falter: “Still—I rely on your promise of forbearance—for even the most unprincipled men have some vague ideas of *honour*!”

Zorndorff turned away, and seemed moved to an extent that he did not wish her to observe; but with true feminine quickness, she perceived it, and a gleam of hope passed across her mind, as she added; “I can scarcely think that you will secure your own happiness by wrecking mine so completely.”

“It is your own fault, Cyrilla,” he exclaimed, vehemently.

“True; but not the less hard to be borne on that account.”

“You mistake me; I did not refer to our mar-

riage," he said, quickly : " much as we have both suffered, I have never regretted that for one moment. If you cannot pardon, and will not acknowledge it now—it is your fault, not mine. You trust to time—so will I. Remain as you are, if such be your desire, and I shall endeavour to bear with resignation this temporary loss of your affection, considering it a due punishment for my—offence."

" Your *crime*," said Cyrilla, angry and disappointed at being deprived of the last hope to which she had unconsciously clung.

" Be it so," he answered, approaching her closely, " be it so ; but to conceal one crime men often commit another ; and," he added, in the low and terribly distinct tones of suppressed passion, " and if you will not be *my* wife—by God!—you shall never be that of any other man."

" You need not swear," she said, shrinking visibly ; " I see that I must submit.....death itself anything is preferable to being your wife."

" Recall those words, Cyrilla. You may wish them unspoken when it is too late. Do not drive me to extremities."

At this moment, they both perceived Rupert advancing towards them with long strides. From the roof of one of the houses, where he had mounted to inspect the rafters, he had seen that Cyrilla was not alone, and instantly suspecting that Zorndorff had followed her, he rushed across the swampy fields, in the hope of saving her from an interview

she had so evidently wished to avoid. One glance convinced him that he had arrived too late ; but, without bestowing any attention on Zorndorff's angry mien, he sprang up the bank to Cyrilla, stooped, and whispered eagerly : " May I not speak—may I not interfere now ? "

" No, no, no," she cried, anxiously ; " we have had, I trust, our final explanation : it was necessary, and I ought not to have tried to avoid it. "

" Adlerkron," said Zorndorff, turning haughtily to Rupert ; " I am aware that you have heard of your cousin's promise—engagement in fact to me. As her nearest relation, you ought to be informed also, that I never will cede any of the rights she has given me. "

" Not even if she should avow a preference for some one else ? " asked Rupert.

Zorndorff's instant start convinced Cyrilla that the actual probability of such a thing had never really entered his mind until that moment. As he strode forward, with a fierce gesture, she sprang from her seat, exclaiming ; " Edouard, I entreat—O, Rupert, what have you said ? "

Perhaps it was a fortunate circumstance that terror just then produced a sudden faintness, and that, appalled by the overpowering sensation of momentarily increasing weakness, she was obliged to lean against the trunk of the nearest tree for support. First pressing her hands to her eyes, and then pushing back her hair from her colourless

face, she looked so wildly round her, as effectually to silence her companions, and fix the attention of both on her exclusively.

With a deep sigh, she once more sat down; and no sooner had a faint tinge of red begun to colour her lips, than Zorndorff stood erect before her, his eyes flashing, while he asked; "Is this true?"

She covered her face with her hands, and burst into tears.

"Zorndorff," cried Rupert, angrily; "I cannot allow you to annoy my cousin in this manner. You have no right."

"Have I not?" said Zorndorff, appealing to Cyrilla.

Her answer was a fresh burst of tears.

"Incomprehensible!" exclaimed Rupert; "excepting," he added, looking steadily at Zorndorff, "excepting, as I have all along suspected, you are taking advantage of some religious scruple on her part."

"Precisely," said Zorndorff, who seemed to have regained all his usual cynical composure; "and I shall continue to do so as the only means of obtaining what has now become my first object in life."

"But," cried Rupert, beginning to get exasperated; "this scruple, if sufficiently well-founded to bind her even now, ought surely to have prevented you from marrying?"

"I wish to heaven it had!" cried Zorndorff, with a sudden burst of natural feeling, that changed

the whole expression of his face. "I would rather have grovelled in poverty all my life than have heard what Cyrilla has said to me this day."

"But having heard it," said Rupert, "there is but one course for you to pursue."

Cyrilla said nothing, but she looked up through her tears, and watched his countenance with the deepest anxiety. A violent internal struggle was evident as Zorndorff walked backwards and forwards before them. He first muttered a few angry ejaculations, and then spoke: "No, Adlerkron—it cannot be—you do not know the sacrifice you expect from me. She is mine—and mine she must remain. Once for all, she shall not—can not—dare not even *think* of any one but me."

"Cyrilla," cried Rupert, in a voice trembling with passion; "must I—must you listen to this without contradiction?"

"She cannot contradict it," said Zorndorff, calmly; "but I have promised forbearance and—silence, trusting that beyond a certain point my patience will not be tried. Understand me rightly, Cyrilla," he continued, approaching her: "A home and something more than a competence awaits me in America; but—I will not emigrate—alone."

"O, anything—anything but that!" cried Cyrilla, in a voice of anguish.

Rupert, completely bewildered, looked from one to the other. He breathed shortly and audibly.

"I do not ask," added Zorndorff, with a good

deal of emphasis, "but I recommend you to be as silent as I have promised to be. More than your own fate depends on your words and actions for the next few months; and as I shall leave Freilands to-day, excuse my taking advantage of this opportunity to request that these rides, and rows, and rambles with your cousin, may henceforward cease altogether: now that I know the nature of your feelings towards him, you can scarcely expect me to permit them any longer." He turned to leave them as he ceased speaking.

"Stay," cried Rupert, impetuously—"stay until I have asked Cyrilla if she will submit to being spoken to in this manner."

"O yes, yes," she said, hastily, alarmed at Rupert's violence. "Let him say what he pleases. I will submit to anything rather than—than—Oh, God, how unhappy I am!" she exclaimed, bursting into fresh tears, "and all—all my own fault!"

"There is some dreadful mystery—some secret here which I ought to know," said Rupert, turning to Zorndorff, "and I must insist on being told it without delay or circumlocution."

"From me you shall never hear it," answered Zorndorff, haughtily. "I leave Cyrilla to confide as much or as little as she pleases to you: she knows what the consequences will be;" and, without waiting to see the effect of his words, he sprang down the bank and disappeared in a moment.

"I have heard strange words," said Rupert, in a constrained voice. "May I hope that you will make them intelligible to me?"

"Impossible, Rupert."

"Then you are really, as he gave me to understand, completely in his power?"

"Oh, so completely that I must obey him—and—give you up for ever."

"I suppose it must be so," he rejoined, gloomily, and then stood with his arms folded, and his eyes bent on the ground, beside her in silence for some minutes. The result of his meditations was not of a satisfactory nature. There was something glacial in his manner and voice as he abruptly asked, "What are your plans for the future?"

"I thought of going to Fernanda, but he has told Melanie that he will follow me."

"I doubt his doing so," said Rupert, "now that he has accomplished our separation. Besides, it would avail him little. Fernanda is not Melanie: a handsome face and person is no passport to her favour; and what she has heard from you will be sufficient to close her doors against him irrevocably."

"She has not heard much from me....." began Cyrilla.

"What! Have you not told Fernanda all?"

"I had not courage. She would have despised me for my weakness and folly, and then insisted

on my acting in a manner which, though it might have satisfied her ideas of right and honour, would have made me even more wretched than I am."

Rupert started forward, grasped her arm, and looked inquiringly in her face; but as she raised her eyes to his, with a melancholy yet perfectly unembarrassed gaze, his features suddenly relaxed. He blushed deeply, and perceiving that she expected him to speak, said hurriedly: "There is no hope of our understanding each other, Cyrilla. I am plain-spoken to a fault; you seem made up of mystery. We must part, and for both our sakes the sooner the better."

"Shall I ask Melanie to leave Freilands before the time she intended?" asked Cyrilla, timidly.

"No; that might create an unnecessary sensation in Exfort. We can avoid each other for the remaining fortnight that we shall be under the same roof. None but the Bellegardes will observe it—they will suppose that we have quarrelled....."

"But we have not, Rupert—we have not?" she asked, deprecatingly. "Oh, my dear cousin, say that you will at least continue to be my friend."

"Your friend!" he repeated, with a forced laugh; "assuredly your friend, and ever ready to be employed in your service."

"Just then Englmann's approach was observed by both with feelings of relief. Cyrilla turned away to hide her face, on which the traces of recent grief were still evident. Whatever reproaches the

Vicar might have intended to make for having been so unceremoniously deserted, they found no utterance. He pretended not to observe the agitation of his companions ; but, walking quietly to the boat, followed by the fisherman's son, he spread out the school-house plans on his knee, and did not even look up as they passed him, when taking their places under the awning. Rupert's answers to his first remarks were terribly confused. Afterwards, however, having apologized for his inattention, he seemed determined to force or feign an interest, and actually succeeded in speaking very rationally and calmly, while Cyrilla, wrapped in her sorrow, leaned back, and gazed vacantly along the glittering water, unheeding of their conversation. Suddenly her attention was arrested by Rupert's lowering his voice, so as not to be heard by the boatmen. He said that he was about to leave Freilands for many years, and greatly wished that the Vicar would take charge of his Vehn colony—that he would build him a house—give him a large tract of land—do anything, in short, that would be an inducement to him. And Englmann raised no difficulties. He spoke of “home missions,” “happy consciousness of not having lived altogether unprofitably,” and—consulting his wife.

Grief makes us selfish. As Cyrilla walked on before them to the house, the loss of Rupert's presence, energy, and boundless generosity to his colonists, appeared trifling in comparison to what

she must suffer when deprived of his society and accustomed attentions. The continuation of these would have enabled her to have gone on for years in that sort of melancholy uncertainty so often patiently endured by her sex, so intolerable to his. Women are so imaginative, especially in youth, that there are few who have not composed some mournful romance, in which, naturally reserving the most interesting part for themselves, they are loving, heartless, proud, generous, vindictive, or forgiving, precisely as these qualities preponderate in their character. Were these flights of fancy honestly confessed, what an unfolding of disposition were there ! As a proof of stronger and more healthy imagination, we may consider the setting aside of themselves, extending their views, and making others to will, to do, and to suffer. There is little reason to doubt that many do so, and are as unconsciously authors of fiction as M. Jourdain was a speaker of prose.

Cyrilla, in imagination, then saw Rupert leave Freilands ; went through the parting interview with horrible minuteness. He was at Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as quickly as she walked pensively a few slow steps. He wrote letters from Lebanon, and let his beard grow—Alexandria—Lloyd steamboats and Italy. He is coming home—she will see him again ; but.....Virginie meets him at St Bernhard.....or somewhere.....anywhere.....and tells him of her love that had

commenced in childhood, and gone on increasing since with every year. And Rupert had seen no face he knew, and heard no voice familiar to his ear for years. What wonder, then, that he.....he should.....yes, they were married, and he was returning to Freilands.....they were driving to the door.....and she was but one of the many friends assembled to meet them !

Her senses had greatly aided this hasty conclusion. The sound of rapidly trotting horses and rolling carriage-wheels had reached her ear ; and, before she could answer Melanie's request, eagerly made from one of the windows, that " she would come up stairs for a few minutes," Klemmhein's phaeton, with Madame de Bellegarde in it, drove to the door. In a rather hurried and conscious manner, the latter informed Rupert that Virginie had gone into Exfort to expedite a letter of importance to Italy ; that Victor had refused to come with them, because he had not yet recovered the disappointment about the lost appointment ; and that Henri was in such execrable humour, she was glad to escape from him. " But, my dear Cyrilla," she added, turning suddenly round, " do you know that the children are waiting for you all this time at the ford, where you promised to meet them ?"

" I suppose," she continued, appealing to Rupert, " there is no danger there, though the water is rather high ? I ask, because Hortense is with them."

" No danger," replied Rupert, " but every pro-

bability of their slipping into the water and being wet, if not frightened. I think, Englmann, we had better go for them."

Madame de Bellegarde not being able to discover what possible use she could be at the ford, and having satisfied her maternal anxiety by providing some one to assist her daughter over the inundated stepping-stones, turned into the lime-tree walk with Klemmhein, while Melanie, following Cyrilla, whispered in an uneasy, hurried manner, "I have seen Edouard, and heard all. Heaven only knows what the consequences of your confession will be. He said he had been less jealous of Rupert latterly than of Count Lindesmar; so if you had only preserved the secret of your unfortunate preference, all might still have gone on quietly."

"I scarcely remember how it was betrayed," said Cyrilla, dejectedly. "They seemed to understand each other's looks. But it is of little importance this day has separated me from both for ever. Rupert intends to travel, and I shall go to Fernanda."

"I believe," said Melanie, thoughtfully, "it is the best arrangement that can be made. Time may yet set all to rights, and the climate of Italy do wonders for you."

"Oh, Melanie, how can you talk so lightly!"

"But, dear Cyrilla," rejoined Melanie, a little embarrassed; "when you hear that Rupert has got over *his* disappointment, which, believe me, he will

with astonishing facility, you surely do not mean to go on pining in this way. No health—no constitution could bear it.”

“I shall not pine for what I cannot obtain,” said Cyrilla, with a faint smile; “and you may be quite sure of my making every exertion to overcome all useless regrets. Fernanda’s society will be of essential service to me; and witnessing her happiness will, I hope, indemnify me in some measure for the loss of my own.”

When they reached the ford, Rupert was just springing over the large stones, which, though covered with water, were still visible. Englmann was about to follow, when Tina called out from the other side of the stream, “Don’t wet your feet, papa; it will make you ill. I can get over quite well alone;” and, quickly drawing off her shoes and stockings, she danced along the grassy bank, and dabbled with her small white feet in the water.

“You are a good, considerate little girl,” said Rupert, with a smile. “Pertl, make haste, and follow her example. You can scarcely expect me to carry you over, I should think. Come, Hortense,” he added, carelessly throwing his arm round the tall, blushing girl; “keep your feet out of the water as well as you can, and don’t pretend to get giddy as you did the last time I carried you.”

The children followed them, and their eager jumps from stone to stone were watched with interest by Englmann, Melanie, and Cyrilla. As they

sat down afterwards on the grass, Hortense pointed with her long, narrow, gray-booted foot to Tina's shoes, remarking superciliously, "You need not have carried them in your hand; they are strong enough to bear the water—quite boy's shoes!"

"Very good shoes," said the little girl, composedly.

"O, no doubt; and the stockings, too.....but they are rather coarse.....I wonder they don't hurt your feet."

"Hurt me!" cried Tina, indignantly. "Mamma knit them."

"Why didn't she knit some for Pertl, too? he has none at all!" said Hortense, deridingly.

This was a fact which no one else had observed. The boy's face became crimson. A painful flush, too, passed over his father's features; and then he bent down, and whispered, "Have you none, my son?"

"I have.....I have....." he answered, with difficulty restraining tears of vexation; "but mamma told me to save them until I returned to school; and I thought no one here would know.....and no one would have seen.....if that nasty girl....."

"Pertl!" said his father, reproachfully.

"She's always laughing at Tina about her dress; and Jérôme and Lucian say that I am a plebeian, because I have not velvet jackets like theirs. I don't like any of the Bellegardes."

"Well, put on your boots, and don't talk any

more about it," said his father, perceiving that the cousins had walked on together.

"Cyrilla.....I mean to say, Melanie," began Rupert, as soon as he was out of hearing, "I have been shamefully negligent about these children. Will you have the kindness to take them to-morrow into Exfort, and order whatever clothes they may want?"

"With pleasure," said Melanie; "a little dress would certainly improve Tina. She is fresh-looking, and can wear blue. What do you think of a round hat, with blue ribbon rosettes, and....."

"Anything you please," said Rupert. "I dare-say they both want a lot of things, and have been desired by their parents not to let me observe it. Pertl, poor fellow! has actually but one jacket, I believe."

"I am afraid I cannot manage for him. I don't like—I mean I don't understand anything about boys, or their coats, or.....or....."

"Will you trust me?" asked Cyrilla, gently. "I am almost sure that I know exactly what you mean."

Rupert's answer was inaudible, for his lips were pressed to her hand; and, as he raised his head, his eyes were full of tears.

A moment afterwards he was playing with Pertl, drawing his straw hat over his face, until the sun-burnt crown was forced completely upwards.

The boy looked dismayed.

"Never mind," whispered Tina; "I can sew it for you when we get home."

"No," said Rupert; "he shall have a new one to-morrow. I think I want one myself, too," he added, taking his own off his head and twirling it on his hand; "it has scarcely the form of a hat since Alphonse made a boat of it!"

CHAPTER XII.

CYRILLA saw intuitively the line of conduct that Rupert wished her to adopt; and as he became graver, quieter, and more occupied than ever, his consultations with Englmann and visits to the marsh still more frequent, she, in unobtrusive imitation of his example, finished the drawings for the President's album, drove with Melanie to Exfort and Neuhof, and took long walks with the children; but the constant exertion in such warm weather only served to add languor to the depression of mind consequent on her total estrangement from Rupert, and soon even began to undermine her health in a manner that no effort on her part could altogether conceal.

Virginie, informed by Zorndorff of all that had occurred, and instantly perceiving that the cousins now mutually avoided each other, resolved to take advantage of the opportunity to insinuate herself still more into Rupert's confidence and favour. He could not repulse her, or even show his indif-

ference as he had done at first ; for she had to a certain extent placed herself under his protection, by remaining at Freilands after the day on which she had accepted pecuniary assistance from him. In a quiet, scarcely perceptible manner, he had since then been obliged to defend her from the haughty tolerance of Melanie, and the not less mortifying cold politeness of Cyrilla, who both, while exhibiting their virtuous indignation, and using that power of tormenting which the former so fluently condemned as the cause of most of the misery in this world, forgot that they were giving a proud and vindictive woman an additional incentive to pursue the course she meditated. Unconsciously, too, but most effectually, they had assisted in forwarding her deeply laid plans ; for, convinced at length that she could not obtain from Rupert more than the interest and regard he had ever professed and shown for her, she now placed all her hopes on his niece, perhaps exaggerated, ideas of honour ; and would have willingly borne the contumely of the whole world, provided that he could have been made to see and feel that she was exposed to it, and even in the remotest degree attach blame to himself. Of the result in that case she was certain.

The day before Englmann and his children left Freilands, Cyrilla took a last very long walk with them. It was the beginning of August, the weather unusually sultry even for that time of year,

and she was afterwards proportionally fatigued ; but the Bellegardes came to spend the evening— exertion was necessary—it was made, and not the slightest flagging of spirits or lassitude was suffered to become apparent. She consoled the children, when taking leave, by promising to see them in the morning, and accompanied them out of the drawing-room when they went to bed ; but on returning to it through the music-room, which had latterly been quite deserted, and was then but faintly lighted by the lamps from the other apartments, she threw herself on one of the low luxuriously-cushioned divans, intending to rest for a quarter of an hour, and.....overcome by weakness and weariness, fell fast asleep.

The departure of the Bellegardes, inquiries about herself, and surmises as to the probability of her having gone to bed, with all the unavoidable commotion of separating for the night, failed to waken her, though it may have disturbed, and perhaps assisted in making more vivid her confused dreams of wandering on marshy ground in pursuit of Rupert and Virginie, followed closely by Zorndorff, from whom she in vain endeavoured to escape. The comparative tranquillity that followed would in all probability have made her slumbers more profound, had not soon after the sound of the very voices she expected to hear become suddenly audible, and it seemed a continuation of her dream, as she heard Rupert with some vehemence exclaim,

“Virginie, I insist on an explanation of these words; such insinuations are unpardonable if they are not well founded..... Speak..... What has Zorndorff said to you?”

“Nothing.....I will never name Cyrilla again if you do not wish it,” she answered, deprecatingly.

“I do wish it—I must, and will know what you mean!”

“Only what I said, dear Rupert.....only what I said.....that a mere promise need not be kept secret, no matter how solemn it may be. Why should not the President be told and consulted? Why should not you know all the particulars, if there were not (to say the least) some *very* unusual cause for silence.”

Cyrilla rose. She knew now that she was not dreaming that Virginie was with Rupert in the large drawing-room; she saw through the open doorways that the lamps were still burning there, though they had been extinguished in the intervening room. With the quickness of lightning she recollected, too, that Virginie was in the habit of remaining every night to speak some additional words to Rupert; that once or twice, when she had descended the stairs with her and Melanie, she had returned to seek a forgotten handkerchief or book; and these nocturnal *tête-à-têtes* were taken advantage of to poison his mind against *her* in the most ungenerous manner. Yet she could not explain,

could not attempt to contradict what she had heard ; for, alas ! it was but too true that “ there was a very unusual cause for silence.”

As these ideas passed through Cyrilla’s mind, she prepared to leave the room unobserved as she had entered it, when her attention was attracted by hearing a half-stifled exclamation of astonishment, followed by a few words of inquiry about herself uttered hastily by her sister. “ She is not in her room,” added Melanie, “ and no one has seen her since the children went to bed two hours ago.”

Cyrilla turned back, saying, “ I am here, Melanie, and have been sleeping on the sofa in the music-room.”

Her appearance seemed to complete the consternation of Virginie ; she shaded her already downcast eyes with her hand, and endeavoured to sink still further back in her chair. Rupert bit his lip and looked vexed ; but the milder feeling changed into something nearly approaching to anger, as Melanie swept past him, and drawing Cyrilla’s arm within hers, said in a low but perfectly distinct voice, “ Come, dearest—we are evidently *de trop* here ! ”

Virginie glanced furtively towards Rupert, and then covered her face with her hands, apparently overwhelmed with dismay at the implied reproach. He stood at a little distance, trying to overcome his irritation and hide his embarrassment by lighting the candle she had deliberately extinguished half

an hour before; and then, with some hesitation, said, "Excuse my reminding you, Virginie, that you have brought this annoyance on yourself. I have repeatedly.....objected to.....I mean, that much as I enjoy your society.....I have ever wished you to avoid doing anything that.....Pshaw !..... you know what I want to say."

"I know that you have ever been most kind, most considerate," answered Virginie, looking up suddenly, while shaking her head in a very distracted manner. "I have borne much from both your cousins lately," she added, rising; "and would bear more, Rupert, in order to be near you; but after what has just occurred, I cannot remain longer in this house."

"Nor can I urge you," said Rupert, a good deal moved at her distress, though doubtful if it were altogether genuine.

"I see," she began, with some bitterness, "you are tired of me....."

"Not so," he cried eagerly; "you quite misunderstand me; and, indeed, on consideration, perhaps it would be better if you were to remain here until our party breaks up finally. I shall explain every thing satisfactorily to Melanie to-morrow."

"Do not attempt it; she will not believe you. I have long perceived that she imputes the most odious and sordid motives to all my actions; but you, who have known me from earliest infancy, judge me otherwise, I trust. You know my innocence

—you know that my affection for you has grown with my growth and strengthened with my strength —you know that it is of a deeper, stronger nature than Melanie has ever even dreamed. Rupert,” she added, solemnly approaching him ; “ before we part, say that you at least have never doubted this —that, with all my faults and follies, you have never suspected me of ignoble thoughts or worldly speculations.”

“ Never for a moment,” said Rupert, warmly.

“ Say also.....if you can.....that you have not learned utterly to despise me for my.....weakness.”

O, well Virginie knew, as she pronounced these words, that no man ever despised a woman for having a too sensible perception of his excellencies, whether of mind or person, or both ; and Rupert formed no exception to the general rule. He did not despise at all the companion of his youth for so decided a proof of intellect and discernment ; and had he been quite sure that her graceful attitude of anxious inquiry was unstudied, he might have answered more at length, and more appropriately ; but even what he said was sufficient to move his hearer more than he expected or wished, and he was obliged to add, “ Now, pray, dear Virginie, be rational, and do not work yourself into a useless state of excitement.”

“ You need not fear it, I am past all that now,” she answered, almost in a whisper ; “ I have nothing more to hope or fear, gain or lose in this world.”

As the light of the candle she then raised from the table fell strongly on her face, he perceived that her features were fixed and livid. This could not be acting, and he said, gently, "Believe me, Virginie, I am at this moment far more unhappy than you are. You have your child, your mother, sisters, brother—many to love and care for you—my hopes were all centred in one, and my lot has been the bitterest disappointment."

"Forget it," said Virginie, without looking up; "forget her, and be happy again.....as happy as you deserve to be.....more I cannot wish you.....and now, adieu."

"Good-night," said Rupert.

"Adieu," she repeated, with emphasis; "I shall leave Freilands to-morrow; and as I have resolved to go to my father-in-law, we are not likely to meet again for years—if ever. Will you not say, farewell? Before your cousins to-morrow; I know you dare not show regard for one so forlorn and worthless as I am."

Rupert half smiled, while he assured her that their presence should be no restraint whatever on him: and he kept his word, for when, the next day, Virginie, with a timidity half affected, half real, took leave of them, Melanie's frigid dignity and Cyrilla's scarcely concealed dislike so provoked him, that he fairly embraced her in their presence; kissing from her flushed cheeks the unrestrained tears of resentment and mortification.

Silence seemed to fall on the house as she left it. The Bellegardes came not that day or the following; and just when their unity was completely destroyed, the small family party found themselves alone for the first time. The President, indeed, seemed perfectly satisfied with the tranquillity around him: to him the discontent of his companions never became apparent. Rupert politely, the others carefully endeavoured to conceal it from him during the few hours he daily spent with them: but to each other the case was different; and though Rupert's efforts to appear cheerful, and the necessary attentions to his cousins were unremitting, they saw his struggles, and to relieve him from the constraint which they more than suspected their presence caused him, began to drive into Exfort every morning, and spent the greater part of the day there or at Neuhof. Virginie, perfectly aware of the advantages of silence on most occasions, had entered into no explanation with any of her family; and they all concurred in applauding her resolution to reside with her father-in-law, while jestingly hinting that she would only do so until her finances were recruited. To Rupert, Madame de Bellegarde regretted the exaggerated delicacy of feeling which had induced her sister to decline General Kersdorff's proposal. "Henri and I," she added, "used all our eloquence to persuade her. It would have been so pleasant for us, you know, and Virginie might have continued to reside here, and enjoy without

interruption the society of those she.....most likes."

His answer was so guarded that she could not remember it when she wrote to Virginie ; but she mentioned that he looked unhappy and harassed ; and that both Melanie and Cyrilla would willingly leave Freilands if the President were not determined to stay there until the exact day appointed for the termination of his visit when he had accepted the invitation.

This was true—and she might have added, they both wished to leave Exfort also ; and that even the prospect of going to Aix was spoken of with satisfaction—Melanie openly expressing her hopes that change of air and scene would be of use to her sister's health, which had latterly begun to decline in an alarming manner.

Cyrilla herself never complained of suffering, either bodily or mental ; she seemed at last to have acquired the most perfect resignation, avoiding, even when alone with Melanie, all reference to the past, all anticipations of the future ; but, while enduring with fortitude the sorrow she had brought upon herself, she deeply deplored the share she had imposed on Rupert, whose feverish restlessness, as the time of separation drew near, was painful to witness.

Nor was Zorndorff happy in his successful villainy. Continually tormented with doubts and suspicions of the most complicated description, he

greatly regretted his harsh threats at the termination of the last interview with Cyrilla; longed ardently for an opportunity of conciliating her, and consequently looked forward with impatience to the return of the Falkensteins to Exfort, in order to have her once more in his uncle's house, where he hoped, by patience and devotion, to remove the fears he had so evidently inspired. His consternation and annoyance were greater than can easily be imagined, when one day informed by Klemmhein that, as Rupert's leave of absence had been prolonged, it was supposed the President would consent to remain some time longer with him. Almost angrily, Zorndorff insisted that his uncle would certainly return on the 12th—he was sure that nothing would induce him to change his plans, as he had important business to transact before he went to Aix. His informant, perfectly indifferent on the subject, was soon convinced that he had been mistaken; but a doubt so provoking remained on Zorndorff's own mind, that, unwilling as he was to enter the precincts of Freilands, he sought and found an excuse for doing so, and the following day rode there at an early hour, apologizing, as he drew up his horse before the breakfast-room window, where his uncle was sitting, for being obliged to disturb him with business even on a Sunday morning.

Rupert and Cyrilla, who had changed colour with equal rapidity at the unexpected sound of his

voice, rose at the same moment, intending to leave the room, had not the President, from consideration for the latter, passed them quickly, and joining his nephew in the hall, retired with him to a seat under one of the trees on the lawn.

Cyrilla sat down again, Rupert walked to one of the windows, just in time to see a soldier of his regiment give a letter to one of the servants, and merely saying, "No answer," touch his cap and ride off again.

The letter was brought to Rupert, who observed, as he opened it, "From Maier! If he want another day's shooting, I shall put him off until next week, Cyrilla, as I know both you and Melanie dislike him."

"Not exactly," she answered, hesitatingly; "but his appearance is unprepossessing, and made a disagreeable impression on us the first time we saw him."

"He is not handsome, certainly," said Rupert, "nor are any of the family; his brother Caspar was even plainer, and Zorndorff completed his ugliness, by giving him a sabre wound in a duel that left a scar on his face he will carry to his grave. Poor fellow, that same scar greatly increased his difficulties, when he was endeavouring to escape to America three years ago. He was some weeks concealed at Spa, while descriptions of him and it were in all the newspapers. Ah, here is a letter from him, the first I have received since his expatria-

tion, enclosed to his brother, and dated nearly two months ago. But what is all this about? Statement of facts—confession—Zorndorff—Spa ”

Cyrilla understood it all. The clergyman who had met them at Spa was Captain Maier's brother—Rupert knew him well, perhaps intimately, and his letter would disclose all she had endeavoured so carefully to conceal.

It did so. The young man, having learned from his brother that Rupert was supposed to be engaged to his cousin Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron, had considered himself bound in honour to write him a full account of all that had occurred at the Géronstère spring. He informed him also of the manner in which he had been subsequently employed by Zorndorff, of his purchases of land and houses, of a projected flight to America with Cyrilla von Adlerkron had his wife lived, and every other circumstance calculated to throw light on a transaction, which, he assured Rupert, he never would have been accessory to, had not Zorndorff solemnly promised to renew the vows so fraudulently made, as soon as the necessary legal arrangements could be completed.

Rupert's amazement and indignation while reading this letter almost deprived him of breath, and before he had half finished it, he looked at Cyrilla, and, murmuring the words, “Unhappy girl!” rushed into the adjoining room, where she heard him striding up and down, uttering violent excla-

mations for some minutes. The moment she approached the door, he threw himself into a chair, and placing his arms on the table before him, hid his face in his hands.

She stood beside him for a few moments silently; then, placing her hand on his shoulder, faltered, "You know all now, Rupert?"

"All—all—more than you do," he answered, without looking up.

"And you understand my motives for secrecy, and will not increase my misery by telling the President, or quarrelling with—Count Zorndorff."

Rupert's hands balled themselves convulsively as she pronounced the name.

"Is there—no hope—of release for me—without—his crime and my folly being made public?" she asked in a whisper.

Rupert raised himself, and without looking at her, said slowly, "You must not think of it, Cyrilla; my duty now compels me to urge you to fulfil your engagement to Zorndorff—it is the only reparation he can make for his atrocious conduct."

"I will not accept a reparation which, in itself, would be a punishment greater than even my fault deserves," she said quickly.

"You will judge differently when I have pointed out to you the true state of the case," continued Rupert, gravely. "Zorndorff, in order to secure his own impunity, has placed you in the most painful position that it is possible to imagine. He purpose—

ly, as I firmly believe, neglected all the necessary forms, omitted to apply for the requisite permission, chose a foreign country, for Spa is beyond our frontiers, and, in short, did everything that could take even a shadow of legality from the act which was to bind him to you."

"I did not know that a marriage contracted in a foreign country was less binding than in one's own," said Cyrilla, thoughtfully. "Melanie is very ignorant of such matters; I am if possible more so; and we did not venture to ask any one who could have given us information."

"Few women understand such things," said Rupert, bitterly; "and therefore they cannot too carefully avoid all clandestine transactions."

Cyrilla received this as a well deserved reproof, and attempted no defence.

A long pause ensued—it was broken at last by Rupert observing, with very evident embarrassment, "I don't think you understand me, Cyrilla."

"O yes, perfectly," she said, quietly. "I am quite aware that our marriage was irregular, and the usual forms neglected. The clergyman himself recommended, and Melanie always said, that another and more public ceremony must take place at a later period."

"And you—and Zorndorff thought so, too?" asked Rupert, breathlessly, as he snatched her hand and drew her towards him.

"Of course; but there was no time to discuss the

matter, as we were separated so immediately afterwards by his father and the President, who followed us to Spa, and would not even consent to our speaking to each other for a few minutes alone. The next time we met was the evening of my return to Exfort, and then another wife was standing beside him ! ”

“ O, Cyrilla,” he cried, springing joyfully from his chair ; “ there is happiness in store for us yet ! This marriage is beyond all doubt illegal ; and I may now tell you without restraint or hesitation, that the duel with Zorndorff, or rather the cause of it, prevented Caspar Maier from ever being ordained ; so that he had no more right to perform a marriage ceremony than I have, and the whole affair was nothing but a disgraceful, dishonourable fraud ! ”

While Rupert, with sparkling eyes and eager fluency, continued his explanations, and told her how Maier had afterwards studied medicine, and was now practising as a physician at Cincinnati, and how Zorndorff had purchased large tracts of land there, intending that she should cross the Atlantic with him, even during his wife’s lifetime, Cyrilla stood motionless—speechless—hardly daring to rejoice ; so greatly shocked was she at the extent of Zorndorff’s treachery, so fearful that a man so unscrupulous might even yet find some way to mar her prospects of happiness.

At length the subject was exhausted, and Rupert spoke not less eloquently of himself. Then it was

that Cyrilla felt her freedom, and yielded to the natural joyful buoyancy of her disposition without reserve. At his request all the particulars of the unfortunate transaction that had so embittered three years of her life was related; after which he made her dwell long upon her change of feelings, and the commencement of her affection for him; and charmed with the blushing, half-willing, half-reluctant confession, might have continued still longer to question eagerly and listen delightfully, had not a glance towards the window showed them Zorndorff taking a lingering leave of his uncle, while his eyes wandered along the façade of the house. Rupert returned to the breakfast-room, and opening the door, desired the porter to request Count Zorndorff to come to him for a few minutes as soon as he was disengaged.

“Rupert.....dear Rupert.....you are not, I trust, going to say or do anything that can provoke a quarrel? Spare him all unnecessary irritation...for my sake, for yours, say nothing of our plans for the future.....or.....”

“What! continued secrecy, Cyrilla?”

“I only meant for the next week or two; and if you have no objection, I should like to speak to him alone now.”

“I have a very decided objection to giving him an opportunity of again intimidating you.”

“Thank goodness he can do so no more,” said Cyrilla.

“ Yet a few threats of taking vengeance on me might still have some effect,” rejoined Rupert, as he bent down his head to hers and looked archly into her eyes.

Cyrilla turned pale at the very idea, and at that moment the door opened and Zorndorff entered.

He slightly frowned and drew himself up, as he approached them, saying: “ There is some mistake, perhaps.....I was told you wished to speak to me.....”

“ I did.....I do.....” said Rupert. “ Read this letter, Count Zorndorff—it is from America—from Maier, your friend and.....accomplice !”

“ Rupert,” cried Cyrilla, greatly alarmed at this beginning; “ I will not allow you to explain. Count Zorndorff shall hear from me alone how ungenerously I think he acted in.....in taking advantage of the ignorance and fears of two helpless women !”

Rupert understood her pacific intentions, and felt that she was acting judiciously. An altercation with Zorndorff would at that moment have been worse than useless; for a single glance at his agitated face and heaving chest convinced Rupert, not only that he keenly felt the pain of detection, but was for the moment overwhelmed by the annihilation of all his long-cherished plans.

Either to conceal his emotion, or to know how much of his guilt was betrayed, he turned to the nearest window and attempted to read the letter. The first

few lines and the words "full confession," sufficed to extinguish his remaining hopes. He stamped violently two or three times with irrepressible rage, clutched the letter in his quivering hands, and then striking it against his forehead, held it there to hide the workings of features convulsed by the contending feelings of shame and disappointment; but his audibly short-drawn breath and heaving chest betrayed all the emotion he so vainly endeavoured to conceal; and even when at length he advanced towards Cyrilla, and attempted to speak, his tongue seemed to cleave to his lips, and he could at first only gasp out some scarcely articulate sounds.

Surprised and somewhat softened by this unexpected ebullition of feeling on the part of a man so little in the habit of being demonstrative, Rupert's features relaxed, and he walked quickly into the next room, and leaned out of a distant window, to avoid hearing the words of passionate pleading that afterwards flowed so unrestrainedly. Cyrilla listened passively to them and the succeeding attempts at exculpation; she did not even raise her eyes to those so anxiously bent on hers; but she evidently believed Zorndorff's assertion that he had gone to Salzburg when she was dangerously ill, in order to explain all and make her free, when, having heard that she was recovering, the sacrifice had been too great for him. He also assured her that in the last terrible interview she had had with his wife, he was so shocked at Margaret's despair, that

he was again on the point of confession when she had become insensible, and," he continued, "had she lived I should also have had at least the merit of self-condemnation, and freely offered reparation—for the words she had overheard that fatal night admitted of no further reserve with her, nor did I attempt any. She loved me, Cyrilla, and forgave not only all the wrong I had done her, but also—all I had meditated."

Zorndorff paused before he added, in a constrained voice: "From you I dare not expect such clemency, and do not even think of asking forgiveness....."

"Take it, then, unasked," said Cyrilla, yielding instantly to the impulse of a generous heart overflowing with happiness. "I am now," she added, unconsciously glancing towards the open door of the other room, "much too happy to harbour anger—even against you. Let the past be forgotten, and our acquaintance begin again."

There is perhaps no moment in which a human being is seen to such advantage as when in the act of pardoning. As Cyrilla turned round and extended her hand, Zorndorff thought her perfectly divine.

But, alas! he was human; and a chaos of deep regrets and wild resolves passed quickly through his mind. He took her offered hand, and exclaimed, vehemently: "O, Cyrilla, had we been again united, the sole occupation of my life would have

been an unceasing endeavour to make you forget.....”

“Yes.....yes; I am quite convinced of that,” she answered, hastily; “but you must allow me to repeat all you have said to Rupert;” and, anxious to avoid further discussion, she joined him, excused and defended Zorndorff with all the eagerness of fear; and, finally, having added some earnest entreaties, succeeded in persuading him to return to the breakfast-room to offer Zorndorff his hand and a total oblivion of the past.

Less solicitous of a reconciliation with Rupert than Cyrilla had supposed, Zorndorff would scarcely have awaited the result of their conference had not his uncle entered the room to remind him of some papers and accounts which it was necessary to have in order on or before the 21st of the month; but they had not half discussed the revenues of the crown-lands, Sennheim and Streck, when the cousins entered the room. Any reference to what had occurred before the President was out of the question. Rupert, however, extended his hand when Zorndorff was about to leave; Cyrilla did the same, and the President, equally surprised and pleased at what he considered a demonstration of renewed friendship on her part, without hesitation requested his nephew to return in the evening, and let him know the result of his conference with the *Kammer-revisor* Klinghardt.

Cyrilla did not hear his answer : before they had crossed the hall, she was in her sister's room, yielding without restraint to the contending emotions she had so successfully controlled during the last hour.

CHAPTER XIII.

By some process of reasoning which it is not necessary to follow, Zorndorff, in the course of a few hours, had fully persuaded himself that the “head and front of his offending” had been against his unhappy wife, and if she had thought proper to forgive him, no one else had a right to call him to account—that with regard to Cyrilla, he had insisted, perhaps, a little too rigorously on the fulfilment of vows, somewhat fraudulently obtained undoubtedly, but excusable on the part of a man so tried and tempted as he had been—and that, all things considered, he had more used than abused the power her timidity and reliance on his truth had given him. This view of the case enabled him to return to Freilands, meet his aunt without embarrassment, and inform her before they were long together of his opinion on the subject; adding, that his only subject of regret was the failure of a plan which would have enabled him to dedicate the remainder of his life to Cyrilla, and make amends

for the imaginary wrongs which had so unfortunately estranged her from him ! Then he repeated what he had said to Cyrilla, in extenuation of his offence, with even increased pathos ; for his hearer, released from all apprehensions, now listened to him with her former interest and sympathy. In her idea the romantic fraud was already partially expiated when, instead of, as she had feared, threatening to revenge himself on his successful rival, he declared he should penitently drag on the remainder of his wretched existence, a hopeless, aimless, blasted man !

Rupert and Cyrilla had soon after his arrival retired to the end room, taking it for granted that their presence must still embarrass if not annoy him. Rupert's gaiety and merry laugh were often stopped by Cyrilla, who, pointing anxiously to the door-way, entreated him to avoid irritating the vindictive man who was then within hearing. It was in vain he protested against further restraint ; with tearful eyes she assured him her fears were still so unconquerable, that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to see him leave for Windhorst the very next day.

He thanked her with mock gravity for her kind wish to get rid of him ; but assured her there was not the slightest chance of his leaving Exfort or its neighbourhood until she chose to go to Windhorst with him—the sooner, however, arrangements could be made for that purpose the better.

"You wilfully misunderstand me," said Cyrilla, "or can you really not believe, that though I have now no fears on my own account, on yours they are increased a hundredfold?"

"I do believe you," answered Rupert, smiling; "but assure you they are quite unfounded."

"Will you at least promise never to refer to what occurred this morning in Count Zorndorff's presence?"

"Not the least danger of my doing so," said Rupert: "you are sufficiently implicated to silence me for ever. I don't even like to think of it."

"And you will also avoid every thing else that could lead to an altercation or quarrel with him?"

"Undoubtedly; but now, dearest, let us talk of something else."

Cyrilla was silenced, but not satisfied; her terror of Zorndorff was still so great, that on hearing him soon after approach with the President, she started up, intending to place herself as far away from her cousin as the limits of the room would permit.

"Stay, Cyrilla," cried Rupert, catching her hand; "I cannot permit this to continue any longer; there is no mystery, no promise now, and you are henceforward at liberty to sit beside and talk to me whenever you please."

She sat down, but in doing so removed her chair to a considerable distance.

Rupert rolled his in the same direction, and was

laughing unrestrainedly at her face of alarm, when Melanie, followed by the President and Zorndorff, entered the room.

"Lindesmar has evidently not found favour in your eyes," said the latter to his uncle, in continuation of their conversation; "he seems in a fair way to take a permanent place among the unhappy herd of expectant candidates for office!"

"Has he again been disappointed in his hopes of employment?" asked Rupert.

Yes; and is chafing immensely at the slight perception which people high in station have of his talents!" replied Zorndorff, sarcastically.

"Poor fellow," said Rupert; "he perhaps imagines your uncle prejudiced against him, which I am sure is not the case, as he is said to have both talent and application. I fear, however," he added, turning to the President, who had merely prolonged his walk into the room, and was again leaving it, "I fear it may be long before he will get a situation, if you do not use your interest for him. A word from you to the minister would set all to rights."

"We shall see what can be done for him a few months hence," said the President.

"Cyrilla," whispered Rupert, smiling, "you are not perhaps aware that one of Lindesmar's chief reasons for desiring immediate employment is, that he may be able to make you an offer of his heart and hand."

“O, Rupert, can you never be serious!”

“Virginie told me so, I assure you, and more than hinted that her brother had very little doubt of your acceptance. For my own part, I have not been able to discover any real foundation for his hopes, though you may remember I made a sort of attempt at jealousy some weeks ago.”

There was something in the expression of Zorn-dorff's countenance, as he silently contemplated the cousins, that made Melanie uneasy, and she endeavoured to attract him to an open window by drawing aside the muslin curtains and making some trivial observation about the moon. He did not move; but two large moths, long perhaps attracted by the light in the room, flew past her, and after having noisily flapped along the ceiling for a few moments, descended simultaneously and beat their wings against the globe of one of the lamps in wild endeavours to reach the flame within.

“O, save them, save them!” cried Melanie, covering her face with her hand; “if they fly upon or over the cylinder they will be burned to death!”

Rupert started up and tried to chase them from their doom; but just as he got them safely outside the window, and while Cyrilla was preparing to close the curtain upon them, with a pertinacity not alone peculiar to moths, they once more rushed into danger, and again eagerly fluttered round the fascinating ball of light.

“Edouard, help to save them,” cried Melanie, turning eagerly to Zorndorff, who stood calmly looking on.

He approached the table; and as one alighted for a moment on Cyrilla’s handkerchief, he placed his hand over it, drew it to the edge of the table, and then, having closed his fingers, walked to the window.

The hand was opened—the handkerchief shaken, but the poor insect, instead of spreading its wings to seek safety in flight, fell crushed and dead to the ground.

“Poor thing,” said Cyrilla, placing it for a moment in the palm of her hand, “it is quite, quite dead; its death at least was quick, and it could not have suffered as if it had been burnt.”

“O!” cried Melanie in a tremulous voice, “the other—the other has burnt its wings, and is struggling on the table—take it away, I cannot look at it!”

Zorndorff raised the paper on which the wounded insect lay, and placed it on the chimney-piece, against which he leaned, gazing down abstractedly.

Cyrilla closed the curtain, sat down, and drew her work towards her. Melanie began to write quickly with her ever ready pencil; and after a pause of a minute or two, Rupert, who had been leaning on the back of Cyrilla’s chair, observed:

“It is incomprehensible to me how Zorndorff

can find anything interesting or agreeable in watching the agony of that moth."

"If it cannot fly again," said Cyrilla, looking up, "it would perhaps be humane to kill it."

"Life is sweet," observed Zorndorff, without moving.

"Not when deprived of all that makes it desirable," said Rupert: "the fate of the other moth was happier."

"Do you think so?" asked Zorndorff, looking up for a moment.

"Undoubtedly. A quick death is preferable to a lingering and painful one."

"And yet," said Zorndorff, "if that insect could speak, it would most probably say, 'Let me live; anything is better than death and annihilation!'"

"Pshaw!" cried Rupert, impatiently, "we are not going to talk fables just now. I agree with Cyrilla in thinking it would be humane to put an end to the existence of an insect which never can fly, and scarcely even walk again."

"Let it live," said Zorndorff; and, going to a distant window, he stretched out his arm and dropped it among the leaves of an American creeper which was trained against that side of the house.

Melanie ceased writing, and, resting her front teeth on the top of her pencil-case, observed mysteriously: "Don't you see, he considered those moths persons?"

"Persons!" repeated Rupert, incredulously.

"Yes; he supposed them men, or he would never have said all that about letting live and annihilation."

"Nonsense," cried Rupert, laughing; "when he spoke of annihilation he could only, I am sure, have thought of the insect."

"Yet the idea struck me directly," said Melanie; "and in these lines which I have written you will find that....."

"O, as a poetical fancy I have no sort of objection to it," replied Rupert; "and perhaps he may also have indulged in some idea of the kind, though he looks thoughtful enough for one to suppose him omen-seeking as usual."

"You attach no importance to omens?" said Cyrilla, half inquiringly.

"I never think about them, and scarcely know anything more tiresome or absurd than viewing trifling occurrences with the eyes of an augur. Melanie, your lines are pretty, though the conceit is too melancholy to suit me. Is it a fact that one moth chased the other to its doom, and in doing so, burnt its own wings?"

"I imagined it at least," answered Melanie, smiling, "and must have it so in order to deduct a moral."

While Rupert and Cyrilla bent their heads over the little book, Zorndorff turned round, looked steadfastly and gloomily at them, and then with an

unusual degree of formality took leave, passing even his uncle in one of the other rooms with a scarcely audible "Good-night."

His absence was a most evident relief to Cyrilla—she openly expressed her satisfaction at it, and also her surprise at his coming to Freilands after the occurrences of the morning. When informed by Melanie of his present view of his conduct, she was only restrained from a burst of indignation by the fear of provoking Rupert to anger, who, as it was, coloured violently, and observed: that Zorndorff had this time as usual managed to compel people to connive at his baseness, but he would some time or other become inextricably entangled in one of his complicated schemes, and be exposed to the infamy he deserved.

As the cousins afterwards sat together on the moonlit balcony, Rupert forming plans of future happiness, to which Cyrilla listened without offering even an amendment, they neither thought of nor saw the solitary man who, in the deep shade of the nearest trees, gazed at them with an expression of such intense jealousy and rage, that his face, in all its perfect symmetry, might have been mistaken for that of a demon.

He was not seen that evening, or any of the following, when the sound of music and laughter seemed to excite him to frenzy—nor that last night when the Bellegardes were accompanied home, and the bright moonlight afterwards tempted to the

lingering stroll in the lime-tree walk ; but *he*, from his place of concealment, saw the parting afterwards—heard the good-night uttered in tones so soft and reluctant, that Melanie, who had been walking on before in dignified abstraction, turned round, and observed with a mixture of surprise and pleasure, “ Why, Rupert, I do believe, after all, you can be as much in love, and as.....as.....”

“ As foolishly fond as even *you* could desire,” he said, laughing. “ Not the smallest doubt of it, Melanie. I have only been waiting for an opportunity of exhibiting my talents in that way for the last three years. I should not even mind walking up and down here in the moonlight now, and saying, ‘ Good-night until it were to-morrow.’ ”

The sisters entered the house. Rupert looked after them until the door was closed, and then turned back into the avenue, and sauntered slowly in the direction of the lake. Before he was quite out of sight, the watcher started forward, shook his clenched hand at him in furious menace, and then darted off in the contrary direction.

CHAPTER XIV.

CYRILLA'S brief span of tranquil happiness was over. The removal to Exfort took place the next day, and Zorndorff once more began to frequent his uncle's house in the regular matter-of-course manner that he had done before his marriage. He never referred to that calamitous episode in his life, seemed to wish it forgotten, and, by returning to all his old habits, endeavoured continually, and often painfully, to remind Cyrilla of former times. Fortunately for her he also attended with unremitting attention to the business incumbent on him as Kammer-assessor, so that she knew pretty accurately the hours when he might be expected, and was consequently tolerably successful in her efforts to prevent Rupert from too often meeting him. Still the evening almost invariably brought them together; and then, perhaps observing the feverish anxiety with which she watched their movements and listened to their words, they generally met

graciously and spoke to each other on some indifferent subject for a short time. The Bellegardes often, and even at a late hour, joined them, but Count Lindesmar had altogether ceased to frequent the house, in consequence of some irritability about his non-appointment to the desired situation, and an absurd idea that he had on that account become the subject of ridicule. The President having heard that some well-meant expressions had been misrepresented to him in a manner to wound his very susceptible feelings, requested Rupert, one evening when he had outstaid all the other guests, to explain to Lindesmar that nothing had been further from the intention of any member of their family than to offend or annoy him.

“I think, Falkenstein, it would be better if you told him so yourself,” said Rupert. “I am going to-morrow to Freilands for a couple of days, and expect some friends there, but as they are all military, I do not know whether or not Lindesmar may be disposed to join us.”

“Shall I not see you for two whole days?” asked Cyrilla, half playfully, half reproachfully.

“I fear not,” he answered, thoughtfully; “and a.....I don’t think I can well ask you and Melanie to come to me on this occasion.....How the time has flown this evening!—it is already almost eleven o’clock!”

He lingered as usual until the President had left

them, and then let Melanie stand waiting a perfect picture of patience while he whispered what she called "his interminable last words and good-nights;" but even when they were ended, and he had reached the door, he suddenly stopped and looked back again so wistfully, so very wistfully, that Cyrilla smiled and held out her hand. In a moment he was again beside her—while Melanie, with a demure smile and slight shrug of the shoulders, slowly walked through the intervening apartments to her dressing-room. Before entering it she waited to bestow on her sister's cheek the customary kiss, but, as she bent down, she perceived large tears trembling in Cyrilla's upturned eyes.

"So, then," she observed archly, "there was a little quarrel to make up? How could it be otherwise after all the nonsense Adrienne talked about her brother this evening? You see, dear, even Rupert can be jealous; but you know lovers' quarrels are said to be a renewal of love!"

"There was no quarrel," answered Cyrilla; "not a shadow of jealousy has ever crossed his mind. But his unwillingness to leave us to-night makes me uneasy; and.....and.....his serious fervency of manner just now....."

"My dear child, you know if it were not consideration for Wilhelm's peculiarities about regular hours, he would never think of going home before midnight; and as to his fervency of man-

ner, you surely have not observed it for the first time to-night?"

"Then you did not think him unusually grave and quiet during the evening?"

"Not at all, excepting, perhaps, when Adrienne was speaking of her brother—and it seems even that was imagination on my part."

"But is it not rather singular that Count Zorndorff has not been here all day—not even to dinner?" asked Cyrilla.

"Important business alone prevented him from coming," answered Melanie.

"I wish I were sure of that—or rather I wish I knew what business could have occupied him the *whole* day."

"Fortunately," said Melanie, "I can tell you. He knew that we expected some people to dinner, and therefore thought it necessary to write an excuse, which Wilhelm sent to me when I was at breakfast: here it is:—"

"In order to prepare the report of the Sennheim and Streck revenues for the Kammer-revisor Klinghardt, I shall be obliged to remain at home all day. Excuse me to my aunt; and believe me,

"Yours, &c.

"ZORNDORFF."

"Good-night," said Cyrilla, smiling; "I see I have been yielding most foolishly to false presenti-

ments of evil. What a torment the imagination can become when not kept under proper control !”

“ But presentiments can *not* be controlled,” said Melanie, following her into her room, which adjoined the boudoir, and like it looked into the quiet courtyard.

Cyrilla’s maid, who was sitting, perhaps sleeping, near the toilet, started up to light the candles ; but, as the room was large, they did not prevent the pale streaks of light cast by the waning moon from being perfectly evident, as they entered through the openings in the carelessly closed curtains. One window was still partially open, and the sound of the gushing fountain beneath tempted them towards it.

“ Presentiments cannot be controlled,” repeated Melanie. “ Do you not remember the Franciscan monk in Salzburg, who, it is said, always knows long before he is summoned to attend the sick or dying? Sometimes he hears the sound of his house-bell long before it is touched ; at others the figure of the expiring person, even when a perfect stranger, is seen distinctly by him !”

“ Dear Melanie, do not talk of such things just now, for I have grown so weak and nervous lately that you might deprive me of my night’s rest.”

“ I believe you are right,” said Melanie, looking round her uneasily, “ Ursula must carefully close the window and curtains to shut out the moon-light.”

No, Cyrilla chose to see the moonlight, and dismissed Ursula a few minutes after her sister left her. She had watched with interest the increase of that moon from the balcony at Freilands with Rupert;—remembered having seen it pass before her a light bright crescent on the evening of the day of the memorable explanation—and all that Rupert had then said, and the succeeding evenings, recurred distinctly to her memory—and then the last moonlight walk to the lake, when he had whispered, “The next full moon we shall see from the towers of Windhorst, Cyrilla!” But one week had since elapsed, yet what restraint, anxiety, and fear had been crowded into the short period! She had seen with dismay that Zorndorff made no effort to conquer or conceal his feelings towards her; in fact, rather sought than avoided opportunities of showing them. An unguarded allusion, made by Melanie the day after their return home, to Cyrilla’s future plans, had so irritated him that he had dashed the book he had been reading on the table with frantic violence, and left the room in undisguised rage. It is true, he had afterwards apologized, but the excuses were worse than the offence; and from that time Cyrilla’s half-restored peace of mind was gone, and her chief occupation latterly had been noticing the words and watching the countenances of the two men whose rivalry she feared might yet bring sorrow on them all. She now recalled the events of the evening with minute care, and could

find no new cause for uneasiness. Melanie was right ; he had been just the same as usual—but—but why had he turned round at the door and looked back so earnestly ? And why had he gazed afterwards so long and silently into her very eyes ? That, at least, was unlike his usual manner—quite.—And why had she not asked him the cause ? She could not go to Freilands the next day.....Of course not.....It was perhaps one of the two days' shooting promised that tiresome Captain Maier, and the house would be full of officers. Should she write ? It would be useless ; he might answer guardedly, and nothing but an interview could satisfy her. What would she not give to see him but for one minute !

She buried her face in her hands, and remained in deep thought until she heard the door of her room, by which Melanie had left it, open suddenly, and felt a rush of cold air enter, which, sweeping past her to the open window, seemed to shake the heavy curtains that impeded its egress. She started up, exclaiming, "What is that ? Who is there ?"

But no one answered ; and it occurred to her that a window must be open in one of the drawing-rooms to cause the current of air and noise that had so startled her. "If we are going to have a thunder-storm," she thought, "I had better close it and the doors too." As she took up a candle for the purpose, and glanced along the room, she saw, or thought she saw, her cousin Rupert sitting at the

window nearest the door, his face partially averted, and the moonbeams playing fitfully on the embroidery of his uniform. She murmured his name before the immense improbability of his entering her room in such a way, and at such an hour, entered her mind ; but as he remained quite motionless, she deposited her candle on the table, advanced a few steps, and stood trembling violently, while she uttered in a scarcely audible voice, and breathing with great difficulty, “ Rupert.....dear Rupert.....do not frighten me so horribly.....you know I am not courageous.....I never was.....and am now less so than ever ! ”

Her heart beat violently as she paused for the answer she could scarcely be said to expect—the figure moved not—and she covered her eyes with her hands, and asked herself—had she been sleeping?—if she were dreaming? She looked again more steadily than before, and thought the colours fainter—the outline less distinct. Convinced now that it was but a creation of her imagination, she walked slowly, but with tolerable firmness, towards the window, and, as she did so, perceived that it gradually became perfectly transparent, so that the form of the chair could be seen through it, and at last disappeared altogether.

Then Cyrilla drew back from the window and gazed round her with an apprehension that no further effort of reason could overcome ; but when another gust of wind closed the door with a loud

crash, her consternation was complete, and she rang the bell with a violence so unusual, that her maid almost immediately rushed into the room with a mixture of amazement and terror. Cyrilla's face was not calculated to remove either. Pale as death, and still visibly trembling, there was something ghastly in the forced smile with which she desired her to "shut *that* window—and tell her sister she wished to speak to her directly."

"Even if her Excellency should have left her dressing-room?" asked Ursula.

"Yes. Say I am very sorry to disturb her, but I must see her, and as soon as possible."

By the time Melanie entered the room, Cyrilla was perfectly composed. She related calmly and succinctly what had occurred, ending by assuring her terrified sister that she was perfectly convinced the figure she had seen was a mere chimera, the delusion of an overwrought fancy, reduced to weakness by the state of intolerable excitement in which she had passed the last three months. She was ashamed of herself for attaching the slightest importance to such a thing—but.....she would very much like to see Rupert if it were possible.

"Do you think anything has happened to him on his way home—or that he is ill?" asked Melanie.

"No; but I wish to speak to and see him before he goes to Freilands to-morrow. Dear Melanie, could you not for once make a great exertion,

and go out to-morrow morning a little before five o'clock?.....He will be so surprised and pleased and it will be such a relief to my mind to see him, if only for a few minutes."

Melanie did not like making exertions, or surprising people, at five o'clock in the morning. She proposed sending at once to make inquiries, or, better still, Cyrilla should write a few lines to explain so unusual a proceeding.

"I cannot attempt an explanation," said Cyrilla; "but I can wish him good-night, and promise to let him laugh at me as much as he pleases when we next meet, for my foolish anxiety about him."

The note was despatched, and in a very short time an answer returned.

"He must have been still up," observed Melanie.

"Yes, your Excellency, Baron Adlerkron was in his study writing."

"Melanie," whispered Cyrilla, half smiling, "he will not now, or at any future period, laugh at us.....for our kind solicitude about him."

Melanie extended her hand for the note. Cyrilla hesitated—then gave it to her.

"*Us*," said Melanie, archly. "There is not a word about me in it; but, you see, 'he too was occupied with thoughts—anxious thoughts of you.' Now, I am strongly inclined to think that what you have seen this night must be....."

"It was nothing but an embodying of my

thoughts," said Cyrilla, interrupting her; "but I consider it so decided a proof of weakness—if not disease of both mind and body—that should anything of the kind happen again, I shall consider it necessary to consult a physician."

"I wish I could find out if he were dressed as you saw him," said Melanie.

"Don't ask any questions," said Cyrilla, beseechingly. "You have already made Ursula look quite inquisitive; and now, good-night again; forgive my having disturbed you, and forget all I have said."

"I can never forget it," answered Melanie, glancing suspiciously towards the window. "Ursula," she added, stopping suddenly, "take that chair away, and draw the curtains more carefully in future."

CHAPTER XV.

"THAT is Rupert, I am sure," said Cyrilla, when, on the third day after the events related, she heard the sound of horses' feet prancing along the pavement in the immediate vicinity of their house. "Just look out of the window for a moment, Melanie, for I have already been on the balcony so often this morning, that I fear the people at the other side of the square may have observed me."

"It is only M. de Klemmhein," answered Melanie, stepping out under the awning, and looking towards him, as he drew up his horse near the equestrian statue that was in the middle of the well-paved open space beneath; "he seems to be watching a crowd of people passing in a sort of procession into the next street."

"Ask him," said Cyrilla, approaching lightly—"ask him if Rupert returned from Freilands this morning?"

Melanie made a sign to him to approach. He did not see it, for his eyes were still fixed on the

crowd. He spoke to some stragglers from it, and then, turning his horse suddenly, was about to ride off in a contrary direction, when he perceived her on the balcony.

"I fear, M. de Klemmhein," she said, observing that he looked extremely pale, and continued to glance furtively over his shoulder—"I fear some accident has happened to one of your men."

"Not one of those under Rupert's command, I hope," said Cyrilla, coming forward; "I know he is personally attached to them all."

"Allow me to recommend you not to remain where you are," said Klemmhein, hurriedly; "a dreadful accident has occurred, and.....it might shock you to see the.....the....."

"Is he wounded?" asked Melanie, compassionately.

"They say so.....excuse me.....I must return to the barracks directly." He raised his hand to his temple, and gave the spurs to his horse at the same moment; and as soon as the clattering of hoofs was lost in the distance, the measured tread of human feet became audible. An unusual silence and solemnity seemed to pervade the moving multitude, and the figure that lay covered with a military cloak on a sort of bier had all the rigidity of death. Although not passing opposite the government-house, there were few individuals in the crowd who did not look towards it—Melanie imagined towards them—and endeavoured to draw

Cyrilla back into the room ; but she either could not or would not move—an indefinite feeling of terror had taken possession of her mind, when she perceived that an officer's cap, gloves, and a pistol, were placed conspicuously at the feet of the unusually long figure. One white stiff hand hung downwards, and the motion of the bearers had removed the cloak sufficiently from the head to leave it and a part of a high fair forehead visible. As Cyrilla's eyes rested on the light-brown curling hair, a sensation of sickness and giddiness almost overpowered her, and with difficulty she reached her sister, who, but just inside the window, was standing with clasped hands, bending forward, and straining her eyes after the retreating procession.

Cyrilla laid her hand on Melanie's arm for support, while she whispered, " Did you see.....did you think.....could it.....could it be....."

" No—no—no—*no* !" cried Melanie, vehemently ; " it cannot be Rupert.....no, dearest.....it is impossible."

" The figure.....the hair....." panted Cyrilla.

" Dear child, there—there are other men here as tall and as fair-haired as he is.....and we could not even see distinctly."

" Let us inquire," cried Cyrilla, quickly, hope giving her again both strength and energy.

" Do not ring, Cyrilla.....the servants cannot know more than we do. We must ask—we must speak to Wilhelm."

They ran through the intervening rooms ; but at the doors of communication, so great was the force of habit, that Melanie paused. Cyrilla threw them both open without hesitation, and entered. The President was not there. She rang the bell, and a servant instantly appeared.

In reply to Melanie's inquiries, he answered that " His Excellency had received an express from the Crown Office about two hours before, but he believed he had already returned, and was in his office below stairs."

" Oh, go to him, go to him," cried Cyrilla, beseechingly ; and for the first time in her life Melanie descended the private staircase, and entered her husband's office.

The few minutes which succeeded were perhaps the most torturing of Cyrilla's life. Doubt, hope, fear, and despair chased each other in wild confusion through her brain, as, with uneven steps, she walked backwards and forwards, sometimes clasping her hands together, at others pressing them to her forehead, in fruitless efforts to calm her emotion.

Melanie's speechless horror, and the violent burst of tears to which she yielded on her return, confirmed Cyrilla's worst fears. It was an attempt to deceive herself when she asked, " Was it Rupert ? "

Melanie's sobs were the only answer.

" And he is wounded.....dangerously wounded

.....but there is hope.....hope of his recovery.....
Oh, Melanie, for mercy's sake say *that* at least....."

But Melanie turned away her head, and hid her face.

"Speak!" gasped Cyrilla, shaking her sister's arm. "Tell me what I *must* hear. Delay is cruelty after what I have seen.....Is he dead?"

"Shot through the heart," answered Melanie, with the forced calmness of a person terrified by the violence of another.

"God help me!" cried Cyrilla, with a half suppressed scream of agony, as she threw herself on her knees, and attempted to murmur some inarticulate words of prayer. A momentary convulsion seemed to shake her frame, and then she sank on the floor, completely senseless.

Melanie's efforts to restore consciousness were unavailing. The physician, who had been immediately summoned, was more successful, but what availed it? The return of consciousness was ever succeeded by confusion of ideas, painful efforts of memory, exhaustion, then a sudden recollection of all that had occurred, a vivid picture of the frightful silent procession in the street, a stifled cry, a few moans, and renewed insensibility.

The President's grief was deep, and accompanied by a gloomy thoughtfulness that alarmed Melanie as soon as she had time to observe it. He shut himself into his room for several hours, then asked for his nephew; and having heard that he

was not expected to dinner, he again closed the door, and remained there until dark. Informed before leaving Freilands of Cyrilla's engagement to her cousin, while perfectly approving of it, he had felt some uneasiness as to the effect the intelligence might have on his nephew ; and well prepared as Zorndorff had reason to be, he had not effectually concealed either his jealousy or hatred of his successful rival from his uncle. Under such circumstances, his absenting himself for three days, and that on the second of those Rupert had been seen for the last time, at an early hour in the morning, could not fail to make a deep impression on the President ; and the only hope that combated the suspicions continually rising in his mind, was the certainty that his nephew knew the severity of the laws against duelling, and would most probably already have sought safety by flight from the penalty incurred, had he been implicated in the mysterious affair.

Great was therefore the satisfaction of the President when, the next day, at the accustomed hour, Zorndorff entered the drawing-room ; and, after a few cold commonplace words of condolence with him, inquired for his aunt and her sister with a degree of sympathy that could not have been altogether feigned.

“ They say Cyrilla is better,” the President answered ; “ but I am inclined to think that the wish to hear all the particulars of this unhappy event

induces her to make exertions to appear so. Melanie, of course, has never left her for a moment since yesterday morning, nor do I expect to see her now."

The uncle and nephew dined *tête-à-tête* that day, and while the servants were present, not one word was uttered by either. As soon as they were alone, the President rose, and pacing the room, with his hands clasped behind him, in a manner that had become habitual, he muttered, "I never can—I never will believe such a thing possible." Then stopping suddenly before Zorndorff, he said, abruptly, "You don't think that Rupert shot himself, do you?"

"I have been told," answered Zorndorff, gravely, "that the surgeons have unanimously decided that he must have done so."

"They are fools," cried the President, continuing his walk, "worse than fools, for they have branded with infamy the memory of a man remarkable for his excellence and the strict fulfilment of every Christian duty."

Zorndorff sipped his coffee in silence.

"They allowed themselves to be absurdly influenced in their opinion by the circumstance of the fingers of the right hand being blackened, as if that could not have been done by another to remove suspicion. Now, mark me, Edouard," he continued, coming close to his nephew, and regarding him scrutinizingly, "it will yet be proved that

Rupert has been forced into a duel, and shot by some one who had private reasons for wishing him out of the way."

"I do not know any one in Exfort who could have entertained such desires more reasonably than myself," answered Zorndorff, calmly, "yet I can give you the positive assurance that my hand has not been raised to take his life."

"Never were words spoken I longed so much to hear," cried the President, with unusual warmth; "and now let us go to the drawing-room. I have promised to let Melanie know all the information I have been able to obtain about this melancholy event."

Zorndorff followed his uncle to the room next the boudoir, out of which, looking very pale, and in deep mourning, Melanie came to meet them. With an absence of the reserve usual in her manner towards the President, she sat down beside him, and, taking his hand, hoped that the sin of suicide no longer rested on Rupert's memory.

"Nothing further has been discovered, calculated to throw a light on that subject as yet," he answered; "but I can speak and you can listen more calmly than yesterday, and I shall endeavour as plainly as possible to explain to you all I have heard and seen. The remains of our unfortunate cousin were accidentally discovered by a man of the name of Fischer, when walking with his brother in the part of the wood nearest the town. His attention

was instantly attracted, as there was a clear space for some distance around, and Rupert was dressed in the well-known uniform of his regiment—on the left his cloak, sabre, and cap, and close to the right hand a pistol apparently discharged. Fischer hurried back to Exfort, gave the necessary information, and competent persons, accompanied by two or three surgeons, immediately proceeded to the described spot, where they were soon after joined by Fischer and the cabinetmaker Forster, in whose house Rupert has had apartments since he has been quartered here. Forster instantly recognised the body, and declared it to be that of Baron Adlerkron, who had left his house on the 22d of August, soon after four o'clock in the morning, and had not afterwards returned."

"It must have been but a few hours after he left us," said Melanie, shuddering. "Cyrilla's fears were but too well founded."

"By the time I arrived," continued the President, "the judicial dissection was ended—the uniform had been found full of blood, and beneath and near the body still greater quantities were evident. In the left side, a round hole had been observed, which the surgeons immediately declared went '*through and through*.' this was proved to be the case, and between the shirt and waistcoat the bullet that had killed him was discovered."

"I suppose his death was almost instantaneous?"

said Melanie, with some difficulty of utterance, as her husband paused.

"I fear not," he answered, "although the surgeons pronounced the wound absolutely mortal. When asked for an opinion, as to whether it were the result of a murder, a suicide, or an accident, they came to the hasty and I think false conclusion, that it had been self-inflicted, either purposely or by chance."

"But what were their reasons for this horrible supposition?" asked Melanie.

"After describing the wound," said the President, taking some papers from his pocket, and selecting one which he held towards the window, "they say:—

" 'This opinion is corroborated by the pistol being found so near the right hand, of which the fingers are blackened, apparently from the burning of the powder in the pan; and also from the fact of the ball having passed quite through the body of the deceased. Had another person fired at Baron Adlerkron, he must have been not only very close to him, but also of extremely small stature. This view of the case is still further strengthened by the fact, that no robbery has been committed, and that there are no indications that the deceased has fallen by other hand than his own.' "

"Melanie," cried a faint voice from the adjoining room; "come here for a moment."

"Cyrilla has heard us," said Melanie, rising; "but she would at all events have insisted on being told every particular."

The President was summoned directly afterwards; and as he slowly entered the boudoir, Zorndorff, whose silence had made his presence altogether forgotten, rose, and approaching the door, looked into the room, now gloomy in the gathering twilight, and saw Cyrilla lying on a sofa near an open window. He was shocked at the ravages which a couple of days had made in her appearance—her figure seemed to have shrunk beneath the folds of her black dress—her face, ever small and delicate, had lost every trace of colour, perhaps even some of its roundness, for her eyes, as is usual in such cases, seemed to have grown darker and larger; but what gave her whole person an air of desolateness was, that her long fair hair, which, curling naturally, had always fallen into closely rolling ringlets, now, though arranged as usual, hung at each side of her face waveless and dishevelled.

She held out her hand to the President; asked him to sit down beside her, and after a pause said, with great effort; "Could I—see him—once more—only for a few minutes—before he is—buried?"

"Impossible, my dear Cyrilla," he answered, compassionately.

"I was present at his interment this morning."

"So soon—so soon—" she faltered.

"It was ordered by the crown-office, after communication with the military authorities," he answered.

"And where have they—" she buried her face in her hands, unable to finish the sentence.

"In the St Leonard's churchyard; but only for the present, Cyrilla. As soon as these painful investigations are over, we shall remove his dear remains to Windhorst."

"There, too, I wish to be buried," she said, with sudden animation. "You will not forget that—in the grave we may be united—promise me that it shall be so?"

"Undoubtedly," said the President, gravely; "but you know too well your duties as a Christian to yield to inordinate grief, and I hope and trust you will make the necessary exertion to preserve your health."

"I am ready to make any effort you please," said Cyrilla, suddenly raising herself from her reclining position, and sitting quite upright, "if you will only tell me without reserve whatever is known of this dreadful event. I heard what you said to Melanie just now—but all that occurred yesterday, surely you must have heard something more to-day?"

"I have got the depositions of Forster and Ehrhardt," said the President; "and if you feel

sufficiently well to listen, I believe there is still light enough for me to read them to you. It is in Forster's house, you know, that Rupert....."

"I know," said Cyrilla; "go on."

"Anton Forster, burgher, cabinet-maker, &c. &c. &c., deposed—Baron Adlerkron lodged in my house for two years; was a man of large fortune, extremely cheerful temper, and liked by every one who knew him. On the 14th of last April, he celebrated his twenty-sixth birthday, and on that occasion told me it would be the last he should spend in my house, as he was about to leave the army and live on his estates. On the 22d of August, at four o'clock in the morning, I heard him walking about his rooms, and knowing that his man Ehrhardt had been sent to Freilands the evening before, I supposed he might require some one, so I got up and asked him if I could be of any service; he thanked me in his usual friendly way, but said he did not want anything. On opening the door, I perceived that he thrust a pistol into the pocket of the cloak he had thrown over his shoulders. Soon after he went down stairs and out of the house; but when passing the door of my work-room where I was standing, he said, in case of Ehrhardt's coming to me, I should desire him to return to Freilands, and remain there until he (Baron Adlerkron) should arrive. This message I delivered, and supposed until yesterday that the Baron was in Freilands. I cannot believe it pos-

sible that this cheerful happy man has shot himself—there must be some other way of accounting for his death.’ ”

The President folded up the paper, while he observed : “ Further grounds for this supposition Forster could not give. Ehrhardt, who you know has been ten or twelve years in Rupert’s service, was in such a state of agitation and grief, that it was found necessary to defer the conclusion of his examination until to-morrow ; he confirmed, however, Forster’s evidence by saying :—

“ ‘ On the 21st, Baron Adlerkron desired me late at night to go to Freilands, and order for the next day a dinner for six—the message afterwards given me by Mr Forster, when I saw him the next morning, induced me to return to Freilands, and remain there, although my master did not come on the 22d or 23d. I expected him from hour to hour—knew that he did not require my services, as there were others to supply my place, and any uneasiness I felt was removed by the steward, Mr Bader, saying, that business was certainly the cause of the delay. Yesterday we heard from the gendarme Klug of the dreadful event that had happened. I do *not* believe that Baron Adlerkron has shot himself ; he was too religious, too cheerful, and much too happy to commit such an act.’ ”

“ I have little more to add,” said the President, turning to Cyrilla. “ Ehrhardt recognised the pistol that had been found as one of Rupert’s ; and

on being asked for what persons the dinner at Freilands had been ordered, said, he understood that Major Arnheim, the Captains Stauffen and Maier, and the Lieutenants von Marold and Treumann had been invited—none of them, however, came.”

“But they may be able to give some information,” suggested Melanie.

“It is to be hoped so; and as soon as a *judicium mixtum* has been constituted, they will undoubtedly be examined.”

The President paused, then attempted some words of grave, rational consolation, but broke off suddenly, exclaiming, “Cyrilla, your loss is irreparable—God give you resignation! We can offer you nothing but sympathy.”

In mournful silence, and with tearful eyes, Melanie presided at the tea-table that evening. The President complained of headache, and retired early to his room; and Zorndorff, who had been reading or pretending to read, no sooner was certain of his being out of hearing than he started up, and, detaining Melanie, entreated of her to procure him an interview of only a few minutes with Cyrilla.

“Impossible,” she replied, coldly. “You can form no idea of what she has suffered since yesterday, and seeing you would but agitate her unnecessarily.”

“Not, surely, when I can give her the assurance that I have had no quarrel, no duel, with Adlerkron?”

"Can you, indeed, do so?" cried Melanie, eagerly. "That would at least relieve her mind from the fear of having been the indirect cause of his death. We did you injustice, Edouard. We thought....."

"No matter what," cried Zorndorff, hastily. "I am prepared for these suspicions, and find them natural and reasonable. It will appear equally so to you, I hope, my desire to remove them."

"O, certainly," said Melanie, opening the door without further hesitation, and advancing quickly towards her sister, who, bending over the only book that can be read in times of trial and sorrow, had clasped her hands over her forehead to shade her eyes from the strong light of the lamp now burning before her.

"Edouard is here, Cyrilla, and greatly desires to see you. He comes to assure us that he is innocent of the crime we both so unhesitatingly laid to his charge; that he has had no quarrel, no hostile meeting, with Rupert; and the intelligence will, I am sure, be as great a relief to your mind as it has been to mine."

"If I could but believe it!" said Cyrilla, with a deep sigh.

"Can you doubt me on an occasion like this?" cried Zorndorff, coming forward.

"Doubt you!" repeated Cyrilla, raising herself languidly, and then pausing. "Yes, Count Zorndorff, I more than doubt you."

“I knew you would,” he said, bitterly; “yet you have heard the opinion of the surgeons, and.....”

“It has not the slightest weight with me,” she interposed; “nor will it have with any one who ever knew *him*.”

“Be it so; but believe at least what I said to Melanie, and am ready to confirm to you with my word of honour.”

“Speak not at all of honour,” said Cyrilla; “you know not what it is.”

“This is hard to bear,” he observed, with an appearance of intense mortification—“very hard; but though you will not believe my words, perhaps my actions may convince you. Had I taken your cousin’s life, I should not be here now. My only chance of safety would have been in instant flight. If you consider this, and my strong motives to avoid doing anything likely to separate me for ever from you.....”

“Tell him to go away, Melanie,” said Cyrilla, in a voice so weak as to be scarcely audible.

“Not until I have said how deeply I commiserate your present sufferings, how sincerely I participate in your sorrow. Cyrilla, I acknowledge that I was jealous of.....that, latterly, I almost hated Adlerkron; but, by all that is sacred, if I could secure your happiness, and recall him to life now by the sacrifice of my own, I would do so this moment willingly—joyfully!”

These words, which were uttered with the fervour

of truth, and in a voice of extreme anguish, made Cyrilla look up. The expression of his countenance did not in the least weaken the impression they had made. "I hope," she said, after a moment's pause, "I hope, for your sake and for mine, Count Zorn-dorff, that I have wronged you. If, indeed, you are not guilty of innocent blood—if you are not the author of this my last and hardest trial—forgive my suspicions, and let us part in peace."

She slowly and somewhat solemnly held out her hand, her lips apart, her eyes fixed inquiringly on his.

For a moment he seemed to hesitate; then, snatching her hand, pressed it to his lips; and, without again attempting to speak, rushed out of the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE renewed examination of Ehrhardt on the following day, and his answers to questions concerning the habits and acquaintances of his deceased master, gave little clew to further investigations, until he observed, "Baron Adlerkron was every day last week in the house of the President, Count Falkenstein, and it was supposed he was to be married immediately to his cousin, Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron. He was there on the evening of the 21st; and, on his return, I gave him a note from the Kammer-assessor, Count Zörndorff. He dismissed me directly afterwards, saying he was not going to bed for some time, and wished, if I did not mind the lateness of the hour, that I would ride to Freilands and order dinner for the next day. Of the contents of the note I am quite ignorant."

On the 26th, the Chamber of Inquiry sent a report to the Upper Court, ending as follows:—
"Although the surgeons are of opinion that Baron Adlerkron must have fallen by his own hand, there

are some circumstances that seem to prove the contrary. For instance, the brilliant position and remarkably cheerful temper of the deceased—his perfect contentment with his lot in life—the orders for a dinner at Freilands; and especially the appearance of the wound discovered on the body; and the fact that the uniform, where the bullet entered, was neither burnt nor singed. Had Baron Adlerkron taken his own life, there would have been the usual marks of damage on his clothes; and he would most probably have placed the pistol on a part of his body that would have ensured a quicker and less painful death. In order to continue the investigation with any prospect of success, we must wish in this case that permission be given us to extend our inquisition to persons of the military profession, without having to wait for the formation of a *judicium mixtum*."

The permission was given, and civil and military, high and low, eagerly awaited the result of a trial in which all felt the deepest interest.

The military authorities were requested not to grant leave of absence to any officer until the conclusion of the investigation.

The arguments were re-examined which the surgeons had advanced to support their opinion, but the Inquisitor considered them insufficient. He observed, that the pistol found beside the deceased proved in no way that he had shot himself, for the black marks on the fingers might have been pur-

posely made in order to remove the suspicion of murder. That Baron Adlerkron's not being robbed caused only the supposition that he had not fallen by the hands of highwaymen; and the ball had passed through the body in so horizontal a direction that it would be difficult to imagine such a wound self-inflicted. These circumstances considered, the court surmised, that Baron Adlerkron had lost his life in a duel, and that the accomplices of the crime had obliterated as carefully as possible every trace of it.

An examination of the ball found in the body led to the discovery that it was for the pistol of the deceased *much too large*.

The Court, finding in this a confirmation of their opinion, now made the most strenuous endeavours to discover the murderer of a young man so universally beloved and lamented.

On the 29th of August, the President, Count Falkenstein was examined. He said, without hesitation, that his sister-in-law had been affianced to her cousin, Baron Adlerkron, and that their marriage was to have taken place in the course of a few weeks—that Adlerkron had been at his house until late on the evening of the 21st, and had spoken of his intention to dine at Freilands the following day. By whom his life had been taken, he had not the least idea, but he was quite convinced that it was not a case of suicide.

That the officers named by Ehrhardt as those he supposed invited to dine at Freilands could give some information respecting the unfortunate event, seemed more than probable; they were, therefore, examined separately, and every precaution taken to prevent collusion.

Major Arnheim declared, that he had not seen Baron Adlerkron since the 21st. On that day, in the barrack-yard, Adlerkron had said he intended to spend the next day at Freilands; and if nothing occurred to prevent him from going there, he would let him (Arnheim) know, that he might join a little party he intended to bring together. He (Arnheim), had heard nothing farther on the subject, and had concluded, either that the party had been deferred, or that Adlerkron had forgotten to send to him.

The Court observed, that it was very unlikely that Arnheim had received no renewal of the invitation, as on the night of the 21st actual orders for the reception of guests had been sent to Freilands, which would scarcely have been thought necessary if Adlerkron had not again either sent or spoken to them. Arnheim answered, "You must take my word for the truth of what I have said."

The statements of the Captains Maier and Stauffen, and the Lieutenants von Marold and Treumann were to the same purport; and although there was every probability that they had spoken to each other on the subject, so it was also not impossible

that Adlerkron, on the morning of the 22d, had intended *after* the duel to renew the invitations to his friends.

But—had a duel taken place—were there no seconds? That was not probable, and it was to be inferred, that Adlerkron's had been an officer, and the one with whom he was most intimate. At all events, there was reason to suppose that Adlerkron's friends would be able to give some information on the subject; and after inquiries cautiously made, it became evident that the two officers in his regiment with whom he had been on terms of unusual intimacy were Major Arnheim and Captain Stauffen: the latter, too, had been seen on the 20th walking up and down the barrack-yard with Count Zorndorff; and, to judge by their manner, they had been speaking of something of importance.

The Court summoned Count Zorndorff before the officers were dismissed; but he, somewhat haughtily, professed his incapability to give the information they desired—did not recollect having had any conversation with Stauffen in the barrack-yard on the 20th, or having sent a note to Adlerkron on the 21st.

While this examination was taking place, a deputation from the Court had been sent to Adlerkron's apartments to examine his papers, and returned in a very short time with the following notes and letters.

(1.) Note dated 20th August 1833, signed with the letters A. St. as follows :—

“ I have spoken to Z. and explained your wishes to him in a manner *not* derogatory to your honour—he left me in order to consult with Count L.—Z. has just returned, and says he cannot arrange the matter amicably, and it must remain as was agreed upon. He will speak to Kl., and proposes himself being your second on the occasion—I cannot—you know my reasons—God preserve you.”

(2.) Note dated 21st August 1833, signed with the letter Z., containing the words :—

“ I have arranged everything. You are expected to-morrow morning at the appointed place.”

Envelopes of both notes failing.

(3.) An open letter in Adlerkron's handwriting, to Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron, as follows :—

“ At length, dearest Cyrilla, my arrangements are completed. What arrangements? I hear you ask. Those which are necessary when the uncertainty of life is increased by its being put in imminent peril. I have been placed under the necessity of accepting a challenge, to which, you may be assured, both my principles and fervent affection for you prevented me from giving *any* cause. I shall therefore once more endeavour to procure an amicable arrangement of the affair, if it be possible, without detriment to my honour; but as I cannot reckon on the success of my efforts, or fore-

see the result of the duel, I write these lines, considering it an indispensable duty, in case of the worst, to let you know my fate, and also to give you the only proof now in my power of my ardent love, and boundless gratitude for your affection. Accept, then, my beloved Cyrilla, the enclosed deed of gift, which will put you in possession of Freilands, and whatever other property I have at my own disposal. Farewell. The thought that we shall meet again will, if I fall, alleviate the pain of parting with life and you. Thank Melanie and Falkenstein for the kindness and friendship they have ever shown me. I am unable to write more; but remain, even in death, with undiminished affection, your devoted

“ADLERKRON WINDHORST.”

“Exfort, 21st August 1833—near midnight.”

The document mentioned was found beside the letter, signed, as witnesses, by Arnheim and Stauffen.

After the necessary communication between the civil and military authorities, Zorndorff, Arnheim, and Stauffen were put in arrest, and their lodgings searched. Nothing, however, being found that in any way related to the unfortunate occurrence under investigation, the examinations were pursued in the direction given by the papers found in Adlerkron's apartments.

Count Zorndorff, on being further interrogated, refused to acknowledge having written the note signed with Z. Competent judges compared the character with that of letters undoubtedly written by him, and gave an opinion that the note and letters had been written by the same hand.

Stauffen could not be again examined for some time. Grief for the loss of his friend, and consternation at his own position, had seriously affected his health.

The police inspector, Semmering, now very opportunely gave notice that a Count Lindesmar, who lodged in the Hôtel de Prusse, although he had engaged apartments there until Christmas, had demanded a passport for a journey to Italy, and that it had been given him, as there was no ostensible reason for a refusal.

A member of the Court of Inquiry instantly repaired to the hotel, accompanied by a protocolist.

Lindesmar was giving directions about the packing of his effects, and seemed alarmed as the criminal functionaries entered his room. After hearing that his sudden resolution to leave Exfort had made it necessary to question him without delay about an affair of importance, he answered hastily—

“I can easily imagine it.”

He was instantly requested to explain himself further—became embarrassed, and his embarrass-

ment was taken advantage of so skilfully, that at length he broke out into the words—

“Would to God I had never come to Exfort, and were guiltless of the crime I have committed! Your suspicions are well founded. On the morning of the 22d, I shot Baron Adlerkron in a duel; but I was irritated and provoked to the deed: if it had not been for Zorndorff, every thing would have been arranged amicably. When Adlerkron sank on the ground I was on the point of putting an end to my own life!”

On being afterward questioned by the Court of Inquiry, he gave the following answers, and connected statement of the transaction.

“I lost my father when I was ten years old—resided afterwards with my maternal grandfather, the Marquis de Vieuville, in France, until I was in my twentieth year. I then returned to Germany, and studied *cameralia* at the Universities of Heidelberg and Göttingen. About three months ago I came to Exfort in order to commence my career in my native land, and if possible procure a situation here. I had letters of recommendation to the President, Count Falkenstein; to the Kammer-director Hatzfeld, and to the Kammer-assessor Count Zorndorff, and have constantly frequented their houses. Adlerkron I knew when I was a child, and he has been intimate with my family more than twenty years; I was therefore the more disposed to be angry when Count Zorndorff, on the

evening of the 12th August, told me that he (Adlerkron) had been turning me into ridicule before the Falkensteins, and, among other things, had said, '*It would be long before I should get a situation.*' Almost in the same breath Zorndorff observed that, of all the officers here, Adlerkron was the one he most disliked; in fact, he had every reason to hate him. It annoyed me that I had been spoken slightly of before persons whose good opinion was of such consequence to me, and I therefore went the next day to Lieutenant Klemmhein, with whom I had made acquaintance at Heidelberg, requested him to speak to Adlerkron, and in case he *had* used those words, to demand in my name the satisfaction due to me. Klemmhein returned to me the same day, and said Adlerkron acknowledged he may have so spoken, but certainly not with the intention to injure or offend me, still less in derision. While Klemmhein was still speaking, Zorndorff entered the room, and having heard Adlerkron's message, cried out, 'O ho! the gentleman has no fancy for firearms it seems. Both adorers of the same fair lady, Lindesmar lets himself be driven from the field by a manœuvre that seldom fails of success with women, and is satisfied with a doubtfully worded excuse sent him through a mutual friend.' By Zorndorff's advice, I then sent Klemmhein to Adlerkron to say, that nothing less than an apology offered in the presence of Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron would

satisfy me, and this message Klemmhein gave him on the 14th. Adlerkron sent me word, that as he had not had the slightest intention of offending me, he would willingly give the explanation I desired in the presence of Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron and the President von Falkenstein, and with this declaration I was perfectly satisfied. On the 15th, however, Zorndorff came again, and informed me in the most incensing manner, that Adlerkron had the evening before related the whole affair at the President's, and that my conduct had been severely censured. Exasperated beyond measure, I instantly sent to him, and proposed a meeting in the wood just outside the town; but when Klemmhein told me it had been agreed to, and that Adlerkron had sent for Stauffen, my anger was cooled. I felt that I had been unreasonable, and requested Zorndorff, who was well acquainted with Stauffen, to endeavour to accommodate matters, if it could be done without compromising my honour. On the 20th, however, he told me that Stauffen had not been able to persuade Adlerkron to fulfil his first promise; and that, for his own part, he could do nothing more for me, as in consequence of some scruples on the part of Stauffen he had himself undertaken to second Adlerkron, who expected me on the 22d at the place appointed. I now know but too well, that if it had not been for Zorndorff, this dreadful event would never have happened. He reassured me when I asked what risk I ran, what

penalty I incurred should the duel become known, by answering, 'Here, as elsewhere, duelling is permitted by connivance.' I went at the hour appointed to the wood, accompanied by Zorndorff, who called for me. Klemmhein was already there, and Adlerkron arrived almost directly afterwards. He advanced towards me at once, saying:—

" 'I am here, Count Lindesmar, to give you the satisfaction you demand, although I am perfectly certain that I have never intentionally offended you.'

"I was about to extend my hand to him, when Zorndorff observed contemptuously:—

" 'We have not come here, I should think, to listen to exclamations of this kind—instead of speeches, you had better exchange shots.'

"The pistols were examined by the seconds, loaded, and ten paces measured. After Adlerkron had laid aside his cloak and sabre he took his place. I fired and—missed. Adlerkron purposely fired much too high. The pistols were again loaded, and this time Zorndorff incensed me by whispering, 'Will you submit to be treated so completely *en bagatelle*? Aim lower!'

"I then fired with the wish to hit.....Adlerkron sank on the ground. Klemmhein and I rushed towards him to raise him up, but we saw directly that he was desperately wounded, as the blood gushed violently from his left side. 'Leave me,' he said in a weak voice, 'I am dying—think of your own safety now. I forgive you, Lindesmar—

you were but a tool in the hands of Zorndorff, who’ Unable to finish the sentence, he made a motion with his hand as if to induce us to flight, then murmured something more, but I could only distinguish the words ‘Cyrilla,’ and ‘meet again,’ and after a few convulsive movements—he died. I was distracted with grief and horror, and would willingly have given my life to be free from the crime I had committed. I reproached Zorndorff bitterly ; but, with his usual coolness, he said he had no time for useless words—our safety required action; and after many proposals, all made by him, we at length agreed to confess nothing and persuade Stauffen, the only one who knew of the affair, to keep our secret. Adlerkron’s pistol was discharged, laid beside the body, and Zorndorff having blackened his hand on my pistol, rubbed the fingers of Adlerkron’s right hand, saying, it would lead to the supposition that he had committed suicide. We smoothed as well as we could the sandy ground, in which the marks of our footsteps were too evident, and then returned by different roads to Exfort. Zorndorff told me in the afternoon he had had great difficulty in quieting Stauffen, who was in despair at the fate of his friend; but that at length he had said, for Klemmhein’s sake he would give no information until compelled to do so by the proper authorities. Zorndorff added, ‘For my part I am quite resolved not to confess, even if you should all bear witness against me.’”

On being asked if they had been accompanied by a surgeon, Count Lindesmar answered :

“Zorndorff said it was better to have as few people as possible concerned ; but that he had engaged one to wait in the Raven’s hut, which was but a short distance from the spot.”

Lindesmar was committed for trial, and on the same day Klemmhein and Stauffen were arrested ; the latter acknowledged without hesitation that the note found in Adlerkron’s apartments signed A. St., had been written by him, and related :—

“On the 15th of August Adlerkron sent for me, and said that Count Lindesmar had called him to account for a well-meant observation that he had made one evening at Freilands, when he had regretted that Lindesmar had been obliged to remain so long unemployed, and had requested the President to use his influence for him. Adlerkron asked me, if the duel should take place, to be his second on the occasion ; but I declined, giving him my reasons at some length, and promising to do everything in my power to arrange the affair satisfactorily—which Adlerkron, who was perfectly innocent, unreservedly said he sincerely desired. Zorndorff called on me soon after to make inquiries on the part of Lindesmar, who, he said, ‘had a strong suspicion that Adlerkron’s courage had been overrated, he showed so decided a desire to get out of the affair on any terms.’ This annoyed me greatly, and I told Zorndorff ‘It was a shame to speak in

such a manner—that he ought rather to endeavour to remove Lindesmar's delusion, and do all he could to prevent a duel that could bring the challenger no honour.' Nevertheless on the 20th Zorndorff came to me again, and assured me he had found it impossible to induce Lindesmar to listen to any explanations. I then informed him that I had declined being Adlerkron's second, and he immediately proposed undertaking the office himself. Directly after, I wrote the note which has just been shown to me."

The deed, signed by him as witness, was now placed before him, and he added; "On the 21st, Adlerkron sent for me and Major Arnheim, and informing us that he had been affianced a week or ten days previously to his cousin, Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron, said he wished to cede Freilands as a gift to her, and begged us to witness the deed, which he placed before us. We did so, after he had signed and sealed it in our presence. Arnheim had not the least idea of his motives for this unusual proceeding; he was completely in ignorance of everything relating to the unfortunate affair; but *I*, when signing my name, felt a painful presentiment that I was witnessing Adlerkron's last will."

To the question why he had not prevented the duel by giving information to the proper authorities, he answered:

"You know our duel laws better than I do, but

not the friendship that has existed between Adlerkron and me for years. Had I betrayed him, I should not alone have plunged him into endless annoyances, but even the severity of the law would have fallen rigorously upon him, and I should have lost my honour as an officer. If you consider this, and my hope that the duel might not take place, or, if it did, might end fortunately and remain unknown, you will scarcely blame my conduct."

Major Arnheim repeated what he had said in the first instance, with the assurance that he had signed the deed, merely supposing that his friend Adlerkron had wished to surprise his cousin, to whom he was extremely attached, with a gift of unusual magnificence.

Major Arnheim was then freed from arrest, and returned to the duties of his regiment, Stauffen released on parole, and Klemmhein the same day examined at great length. He related without reserve his own share in the disastrous event—knew perfectly the risk he had incurred, as he had studied law at Heidelberg, where he had made the acquaintance of Count Lindesmar. Afterwards, preferring the military profession, he had entered the army about two years previously, and had been, during that time, quartered at Exfort.

On being requested to give a detailed account of the duel, he did so in the following words:—

"On the 13th of August, Lindesmar came to me, and said he had been injured and insulted by Ad-

lerkron, who in the presence of the President and his family had made a jest of the delays in his appointment to a situation at Exfort—Zorndorff had repeated the whole conversation to him. I observed that jesting unkindly was very unlike Adlerkron's usual habits; but Lindesmar was angry, insisted on my demanding immediate satisfaction in his name, and requested me at the same time to be his second. I went directly to Adlerkron, who said that, when speaking of Lindesmar, he may have used the words in question, but certainly not scoffingly, and with no intention to injure him, as he had more than once urged the President to use his influence to prevent his being again disappointed. I repeated all this to Lindesmar, who was perfectly satisfied with the explanation, and would have let the matter rest if it had not been for the infernal insinuations and sneers of Zorndorff, who unfortunately entered the room while we were still speaking on the subject. I do not exactly remember what he said, but at all events enough to make it necessary for me to go again the next day to Adlerkron, and say that Lindesmar would not withdraw the challenge unless he consented to make an apology in the presence of Mademoiselle d'Adlerkron! At this unexpected demand, Adlerkron smiled, but after a few moments' consideration observed, that as he had never had the slightest intention of offending Count Lindesmar, he had no objection to say so in the presence of his

cousin ; and if Lindesmar imagined that his well-meant observation had injured him in the opinion of the President, he would endeavour that very evening to repair the mischief, and set all to rights. When I told all this to Lindesmar, he was completely appeased ; and I was therefore greatly surprised at his requiring me, on the 15th, to be again the bearer of a hostile message to Adlerkron. On the evening of the 21st, Lindesmar wrote me a note desiring me to meet him the next morning at four o'clock in the wood outside the town. I went—was joined by Lindesmar and Zorndorff, and immediately afterwards by Adlerkron. He advanced towards Lindesmar, and made some conciliatory observation ; but Zorndorff interfered, and it was then agreed that they were to fire three times. Zorndorff, as Adlerkron's second, proposed five paces distance. I insisted on at least ten, and then the unfortunate duel began. I examined, and at Zorndorff's request loaded both pistols. The construction was perfectly similar, so each received his own weapon. Lindesmar fired and missed—Adlerkron did not pretend to aim, he fired deliberately in the air, and I thought, after such a proof of forbearance, that Lindesmar would be satisfied. Zorndorff, however, urged the reloading of the pistols, and as Lindesmar again prepared to fire, Adlerkron seemed astonished at such unexpectedly shabby conduct. A moment afterwards he was stretched on the ground mortally wounded.

We endeavoured to raise him, but he requested us to desist, and I then saw that the ball had entered his side, and the blood was gushing from the wound with frightful violence. He spoke a few words—wished us to provide for our safety by flight—forgave Lindesmar, and died pronouncing the name of his cousin. I was too much shocked to pay much attention to what was said ; but I can remember that Lindesmar was in a state bordering on distraction, and that he accused Zorndorff of being the cause of all that had happened. After proposing several plans for the concealment of Adlerkron's remains, Zorndorff said it was better to leave the body where it lay, and to efface every trace that could lead to the conjecture that a duel had taken place. While he arranged the sabre and cap, I discharged the pistol and laid it beside Adlerkron's hand, the fingers of which Zorndorff carefully blackened. We left the spot after having agreed to preserve our dreadful secret by the most profound silence. I believe I ought to add that you will scarcely induce Zorndorff to acknowledge his share in this lamentable affair, as he said he would submit to torture rather than confess ; and I can well imagine it, for his conduct was villanous throughout. He had undertaken to engage Dr Hurtig to remain in the Raven's hut ; but when I proposed going for him, it became evident he had given himself no concern about the matter ; and on my reproaching him for his unpardonable

neglect, he answered coldly : ‘ Of what use would Hurtig have been to us ? Let us rather rejoice that one less has been intrusted with our secret.’

“ He then undertook to inform Stauffen of the fatal termination of the duel. Until then I had not known of his having been consulted. Adlerkron was not missed on the 22d and 23d, as he was still on leave.”

It is unnecessary here to follow the careful manner in which the investigation was continued—the revisal of the opinion of the surgeons by the *Medicinal Collegium*, and the cross-questioning of Lindesmar and Klemmhein, from whom, however, little more information could be obtained. On its being proved that Adlerkron, after having evidently fired in the air, continued on the same spot, facing his adversary, the Inquisitor asked Lindesmar how he could reconcile it to himself, having fired a second time at a man who, the moment before, had spared his life, and, by his careless position, showed the reliance he placed in the generosity of his opponent ? Lindesmar answered, with the most violent demonstrations of grief, “ Spare me, for Heaven’s sake ! I already feel, to its fullest extent, the odiousness of my conduct. Zorndorff took advantage of my natural impetuosity of temper, and provoked me to anger when there was no time for thought.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A few days after his arrest, Zorndorff had been attacked by fever, and was so long ill, and afterwards so debilitated, that several weeks elapsed before his physician would consent to his being summoned for examination. On his first appearance, he answered the usual questions concerning his birth, parentage, education, situation in life, &c. &c. &c., with haughty composure; but the moment the interrogatories took a more serious direction, he became so angry and excited, that the Inquisitor interrupted him by saying,—

“Count Zorndorff, you are in a state of irritation that precludes the possibility of my continuing your examination to-day;” and he was reconducted to prison without further explanation.

It had become evident that Lindesmar and Klemmhein had been right in the supposition that Zorndorff would not confess willingly and without reserve as they had done, and it was resolved to procure the strongest evidence against him before he should be again summoned.

His housekeeper, Frederica Schultze, was sworn, and deposed that, on the evening of the 21st of August, Count Zorndorff had desired *her* to waken him the next morning soon after three o'clock. She did so, and observed that, directly he was dressed, he had gone to the Hôtel de Prusse, which is in their neighbourhood. At the end of about an hour and a half he returned home, and, saying he must wash his hands, went to his dressing-room. She remarked at the time that his right hand was blackened, and, on afterwards removing the towel, perceived some streaks of black on it also. The house-linen had not been washed since that time, and she could produce the towel if necessary. This was required of her, and she then added: "The Count was extremely vexed at having lost his seal-ring while out walking that morning; but when I asked him to tell me where he had been, intending to look for it myself, he told me, as it was market-day, the ring had most probably been found already by some of the peasants he had met entering the town."

Search was immediately made for the ring in the part of the wood where the duel had taken place, and the proprietor of the Hôtel de Prusse, Johann Baer, examined.

"He remembered the 22d of August, from a very painful cause—it was the day on which he had lost his youngest child, at two o'clock in the morning. About a quarter to four, as he was carrying his

dead infant to a room on the ground-floor, Count Zorndorff entered the Hotel, and walked up the stairs. He had asked if Count Lindesmar were up; and on the waiter Anton Sporl's answering that the Count had long been dressed, he observed, 'More punctual than I am, it seems.'—They left the house together immediately afterwards."

The waiter Sporl confirmed Baer's deposition; also the chambermaid Martha Gossmann. The latter added, "that Count Lindesmar returned to the hotel, pale and anxious-looking, and had not eaten anything the whole day. Towards noon he had walked about so uneasily in his room, sighing and speaking to himself, that curiosity had induced her to listen at the door, and she had distinctly heard the words 'Zorndorff—Zorndorff—what have you done!' When, on the 24th, she heard that an officer had been found dead in the wood, it had immediately occurred to her that the Count must know something about the matter."

The search of the persons sent to look for the Zorndorff ring was unsuccessful, although the sand had been raked up, and passed through sieves; but the object of search having become generally known, and a reward offered, the following day, soon after sunrise, a poor day-labourer and his sister repaired to the spot, hoping to be more fortunate. As the latter walked towards a fir-tree, at a little distance, in order to hang the handkerchief containing their breakfast upon one of the lower branches, she per-

ceived a kid glove lying on it, and to her great joy, on examination, found that it contained a gold seal ring, which had probably been drawn unconsciously from the hand with the glove. They immediately returned to Exfort, received the promised reward, and the following day made the necessary deposition before the court.

Although scarcely a doubt could be entertained that this was the ring of which Zorndorff had spoken to his housekeeper, as not only the Zorndorff arms were engraved upon it, but inside also the letters E. G. v. Z. (Edouard Graf von Zorndorff) it was nevertheless considered advisable to question Frederica Schultze on the subject, and she declared without hesitation that it was a ring the Count constantly wore, and never removed from his finger excepting to seal his letters.

She was then asked, if she could remember any notes or letters having been sent to any one in the town on or immediately before the 21st of August, and, after a moment's consideration, she answered, "The Count himself requested *me* to take a note for him, at a late hour on that day, to Baron Adlerkron's lodgings; and at the same time sent a packet of important papers, and another note, by his servant to the Kammer-revisor Klinghardt."

The Inquisitor went himself to the Kammer-revisor's, and, on consulting the official documents, found, under the number 1233, a—

“ Report of the Revenues of the Crownland Sennheim and Streck.”

Klinghardt immediately recollected that Zorndorff was reporter in this case, and that he had received a note from him on the subject. This, too, was soon found, and was of importance, as it was dated—

“ Exfort, 21st August, 1833, evening, 8 o'clock,” and had been apparently sealed with the ring in possession of the court.

To make the evidence complete, however, an engraver and medal-coiner were consulted ; and then Count Zorndorff was summoned for examination.

Illness, imprisonment, and perhaps some other causes, combined to make him look ill, and even paler than ever ; but he walked forward as calmly, and seated himself in the offered chair with precisely the same easy negligence, as if he had been in a drawing-room, and was about to commence the most indifferent conversation. He had probably repented his vehemence on a former occasion ; for when required to say where he had been on the 21st of August, and how employed, he answered quietly—

“ I did not leave my apartments the whole day, as I had business of importance to transact.”

Inquisitor. “ How does it happen that you remember that day so accurately ?”

Zorndorff. “ My memory seldom fails me.”

Inquisitor. "Then you can of course recollect the business on which you were employed?"

Zorndorff. "O, certainly.....but I should think it was not necessary for me *here* to give an account of my employments as a civil officer in the service of the state."

Inquisitor. "It is required of you."

Zorndorff. I made a report of the revenues of the crown-land, Sennheim and Streck."

Inquisitor. "What did you do with the report when made?"

Zorndorff. "I sent it on the evening of the 21st to the Kammer-revisor Klinghardt."

Inquisitor. "With or without a note from you?"

Zorndorff. "With a note from me.....May I know for what purpose you ask these questions?"

Inquisitor. "Do you recognise this writing?"
(The note to Klinghardt was handed to him).

Zorndorff. "It is the note of which I have just spoken—how did it come into *your* hands?"

Inquisitor. "Now, examine this note—and that found in Baron Adlerkron's apartment (it was placed before him), and acknowledge that the handwriting is perfectly similar."*

Zorndorff. "Many people's handwriting may be like mine ; I do not at all dispute the resemblance."

* It is evident that the Inquisitor, by this observation, endeavoured to conceal from Zorndorff his wish to obtain from him an acknowledgment that he had used his seal ring on the evening of the 21st August.

Inquisitor. "Nothing seems wanting but the address and seal to.....

Zorndorff. (Interrupting him quietly) "The seal failing is, however, of some importance—hand-writing is more easily imitated than arms engraved."

Inquisitor. "The seal on Klinghardt's note is then yours?"

Zorndorff. "Undoubtedly."

Inquisitor. "And you certainly wrote to him on the evening of the 21st?"

Zorndorff (impatiently). "I have already said so." (After a pause, he added,) "May I ask if my request to see Count Lindesmar is likely to be granted? I shall suffer considerable pecuniary loss if he leave Exfort without my having had an interview with him."

Inquisitor (not taking any notice of the latter part of this remark). "That is probably the Lindesmar who was at the Hôtel de Prusse some time ago—he is no longer there—it is more than a month since he asked for a passport, intending to travel, I believe."

Zorndorff found it difficult to conceal his satisfaction at this answer, though he pretended annoyance at his loss, and added, that "he ought not to have trusted any one on so short an acquaintance."

Inquisitor. "Yet it is said you have been very intimate with him."

Zorndorff. "Only apparently. In consequence

of an especial letter of introduction, I was obliged to show him some attention."

Inquisitor. "Enough of him. Tell me how you employed yourself on the 22d of August."

Zorndorff. "Not having any pressing business, I remained at home the greater part of the day."

Inquisitor. "As, however, it has been positively asserted that you left your apartments at a *very early* hour on the morning of that day, I must request you to be more accurate in your answer."

Zorndorff. "Who says that I went out early on the 22d?"

Inquisitor. "Many people have said so—both men and women, the truth of whose depositions we can have no reason to doubt."

Zorndorff. "Depositions !....."

Inquisitor. "Count Zorndorff, we know that on that morning you were wakened at your own desire soon after three o'clock. Will you acknowledge that to be the case or not?"

Zorndorff. "You had better ask the person who wakened me."

Inquisitor. "Then you really wish your *house-keeper* to assist your memory?"

Zorndorff. "No....I....I remember having gone out soon after the hour you mention."

Inquisitor. "For what purpose?"

Zorndorff. "To see Lindesmar, who owed me some money."

Inquisitor. "Did you see him?"

Zorndorff. "Yes; but I came at an unseasonable time—Baer's child had just died, and Lindesmar had no money."

Inquisitor. "How long did you remain with Lindesmar?"

Zorndorff. "A very few minutes—it was gloomy at the hotel, and we went out to walk."

Inquisitor. "Did you meet any one?"

Zorndorff. "It was too early."

Inquisitor. "It is said, however, that your walk ended in a meeting with some acquaintances."

Zorndorff. "Who says so?"

Inquisitor. "A meeting with some officers of the garrison here."

Zorndorff. "I dislike military men."

Inquisitor. "That may be; but it does not prove that you did not on the morning in question meet such."

Zorndorff. "Let me see those who say they met me."

(It had been arranged that, during this examination, Count Lindesmar and Lieutenant Klemmhein should be brought to separate rooms in the vicinity of the trial-chamber, and that on a bell being rung once, Klemmhein, and, if twice, Lindesmar, should appear. At the appointed sign, Klemmhein entered the room).

Zorndorff (surprised). "Klemmhein!.....You here?"

Klemmhein was motioned to retire without speaking, and the Inquisitor asked Zorndorff if he had not met that officer on the morning of the 22d.

Zorndorff looked gloomily on the ground without answering.

Inquisitor. "Do you know this ring?" (He showed him the one found near the fatal spot).

Zorndorff started; became deadly pale, and, his eyes still fixed on the ring with a look of horror, he stammered, "Yes—yes—I lost—I mean—I gave it to—Lindesmar six or eight weeks ago."

Inquisitor. "Indeed! Then how could you have sealed a note with it on the 21st of August?"

Zorndorff gazed at the ring in silence.

Inquisitor. "Can you explain this contradiction?"

Zorndorff. "Lindesmar—was still here at that time....."

The Inquisitor gave the expected sign, and Lindesmar advanced towards them.

Inquisitor (to Lindesmar). "Has this ring ever been in your possession?"

Lindesmar. "Never."

Inquisitor. "Do you owe Count Zorndorff any money?"

Lindesmar (turning angrily to Zorndorff). "Did I ever in the course of our acquaintance borrow the most trifling sum of you, Count Zorndorff?"

The Inquisitor made a sign to Lindesmar to withdraw without waiting for an answer to his in-

dignant query, and then turned to Zorndorff, who had covered his eyes with his hand.

“When I said that Lindesmar was no longer at the Hôtel de Prusse, you falsely concluded he had undertaken the journey to Italy you so strongly recommended to him—he and Klemmhain were arrested before you, and they and Stauffen have related, without reserve, every circumstance concerning the unfortunate event of which you still pretend ignorance. All that you have said, done, and written in this fatal affair to Klemmhain, Lindesmar, and Stauffen, has been, I can assure you solemnly, officially collected, and the legal documents are now ready for judgment; but it is not alone living witnesses that testify against you—inanimate things give evidence almost as strong. I need not explain to you the circumstances attending the finding of your ring, or the conclusion drawn from this towel (he pointed towards the one brought by Zorndorff’s housekeeper, and soiled with streaks of black), or this (and Lindesmar’s pistol and corresponding bullet were placed before him). You know all; but the court of inquiry is equally well informed, and it is useless your any longer trying to deceive yourself as to the position in which you are placed.”

Zorndorff, who, during this speech, had never once raised his eyes from the ground, now rose, and with great difficulty uttered the words: “I am too much confused to explain—to—to confess just

now. Give me time—time to end this last, most horrible, internal struggle.”

Inquisitor. “If you prefer writing, Count Zorndorff, you shall be furnished with the necessary materials in your room.”

Zorndorff instantly accepted this proposal, and an hour afterwards the Inquisitor received from him the following letter:—

“I feel too deeply how much I deserve the scorn and detestation of every one who may ever hear of the deplorable event that took place on the 22d of last August, to attempt any sort of palliation of my crime, nor shall I endeavour in any way to soften just indignation by a description of the mental sufferings I have endured since the perpetration of it, but declare at once that *I was Adlerkron’s murderer*. Lindesmar was but a tool used and abused by me, and Adlerkron, in the agonies of death, endeavoured to console him with this assurance, moved, perhaps, by his tears of penitence and exclamations of despair. One motive alone urged me to this deed—one so strong as to make me oversee all the dangers that surrounded it: I loved Cyrilla von Adlerkron, and vowed the destruction of the two men who had latterly been my rivals, and were preferred to me on all occasions. I provoked a quarrel between them, intrigued unceasingly until a duel was brought about, thinking that—let but one fall, the other must seek safety in flight, and (fool that I was) Cyrilla

might then be mine!.....Spare me the recital of the intrigues by which Adlerkron's death was caused : it will suffice if I acknowledge that I misrepresented a well-meant observation of his to Lindesmar,—that I provoked the latter to send him a challenge,—told him that duelling was connived at here,—misused the confidence placed in me by him when he requested me to effect an honourable arrangement of the affair,—that I offered.....*forced myself* on Adlerkron as a second, in order to ensure the taking place of the duel,—that I *did* write the note to him, now in your possession,—went myself for Lindesmar on the morning of the 22d, and then enacted the part of second to his adversary. I confess that, in order to ensure a fatal termination to the duel, I proposed but five paces distance,—that Klemmhein would not consent,—and that, before the second shot, I irritated Lindesmar's irascible temper by a sneer, and then told him to be more steady, and to aim lower.....Adlerkron's second was a dishonourable scoundrel—you.....every one will say—and I have not one word to offer in exculpation.....Although I had undertaken to procure a surgeon on this occasion, I purposely omitted doing so—the idea that *one* must die had so completely taken possession of my mind.....It was I who proposed laying the imputation of suicide on the victim alike of my love and hatred. I did everything in my power to promote this end

—it was necessary for our safety ; and.....Cyrilla von Adlerkron would more easily forget a man who had fallen by his own hand, than one whose life had been a sacrifice to an overstrained sense of honour. I need scarcely add, that I threw my glove on a tree or on the ground, and unintentionally with it a ring so very valuable to me that, had not conscience made me for the first time in my life a coward, I should at any risk have searched for it. That I urged Lindesmar to escape to Italy, fearing that his compunction and penitence might induce him to act in a manner inimical to my plans, may form the conclusion of this confession. Any further particulars necessary for the completion of the evidence I shall willingly give during the final examination, which will probably take place in a day or two. “ZORNDORFF.”

“Exfort Jail, the 7th October 1833.”

During this final examination, on the 10th, 12th, and 13th of October, Zorndorff, Lindesmar, and Klemmhein repeated their confessions, with a few unimportant additions. Counsel was appointed for each. On the 26th all the collected evidence and acts, together with the written defence of each separately, were forwarded to the *Justiz Collegium*, which, in the first instance, pronounces sentence in criminal cases ; but it was not until the following 9th of November that the opinion of the reporter and result of the session became known at Exfort.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CYRILLA'S anguish on receiving Rupert's letter it is impossible to describe—not even Melanie obtained admittance to her room for hours afterwards; yet in the evening she was again in the drawing-room—again urging the President to tell her the whole truth, and then listening with breathless attention while, with forced composure, he read aloud the written depositions, or rather confessions, of Lindesmar and Klemmhein. The description of Rupert's last moments, however, almost overcame her fortitude, and caused such evident torture that Melanie was about to interrupt her husband, had she not been deterred from doing so by Cyrilla's looks and signs of entreaty. He finished; and, after a long pause, Melanie observed, with some bitterness,—

“For a person professing friendship, as Captain Stauffen did for our poor dear Rupert, I must say he acted in an unpardonably selfish manner towards him.”

"He is the son of a clergyman," answered the President, drily, "and abhors duelling as.....as every one ought to do."

"If Rupert had only applied to Major Arnheim," persisted Melanie.

"He was too considerate to entangle a man on the eve of marriage in such an affair," replied the President. "Arnheim said so himself to-day."

"With regard to Edouard....." she then began, hesitatingly.

"Name him not," said the President, rising. "If he cannot deny and disprove the charges this day brought against him, he is more culpable than even that wavering hot-brained fellow, Lindesmar. But," he added, with a perceptible tremor in his voice—"but we will not condemn him unheard. It is not impossible or even improbable that Lindesmar and Klemmhein have agreed to throw the blame on him, in order to exculpate themselves. This is my last and only hope, and I shall cling to it as long as I can."

So did Melanie and Cyrilla also, but for reasons unknown to any but themselves. They wished to mourn without remorse.

Separated, as a matter of course, from the Bellegarde family, and unwilling to see any of their other acquaintances at Exfort, Cyrilla and Melanie returned to Freilands, when the President left them to spend a short time with his unhappy brother-in-law, General Zorndorff. At Cyrilla's request, the Vicar

of Windhorst soon after joined them, and almost every word of Rupert's conversation with him the last day they had been on the lake together recurring to her memory, she felt a melancholy satisfaction in carrying into execution the plan proposed on that occasion, and conferring on Englmann the house and land then offered him, on the condition of his residing at and undertaking at once the complete management of the Vehn colony. The President, when he joined them, informed of the restless exertions made by Cyrilla on this occasion, hoping it might, by diverting her mind from her grief, be beneficial to her health, conscientiously encouraged her by every means in his power to persevere. If he thought her endowment of the Vicar, the schools, and hospital unnecessarily splendid, he did not say so, neither did he object to the presence of Conrad of Waldenburg, who unexpectedly made his appearance one morning, and seemed to have no other object than to walk about with Cyrilla, row her on the lake, and search for the few remaining wild-flowers still to be found.

A more changed house than Freilands it is scarcely possible to imagine. Silence and melancholy had taken the place of the gay voices and music that once were heard within its walls; no visitors were admitted; and the Bellegardes, who had put on the deepest mourning for Rupert, having once requested an interview, were so shocked and depressed at all they saw and heard, so painfully

alive to the contrast offered them, and so overwhelmed by the consciousness that a member of their family had caused the misery around them, that they wept more than they spoke; and hurrying from the house of sorrow, protested to each other, in whispers, that they would not again intrude on a family where their presence must henceforward renew affliction, and their sympathy almost appear a mockery.

“ Henri,” said Madame de Bellegarde to her husband, as he was about to leave them, after their return home, “ I saw you speaking to the President—of course about Victor.”

“ Yes, he was at first extremely unwilling to give me any information; but as I carefully avoided making offensive allusions to Zorndorff’s conduct, and attempted no useless defence of Victor, he told me it was probable that his education in France would be taken into consideration, where duelling is not named in the criminal code; and where the Court of Cassation, in the year 1818-19, decided that neither wounding nor killing in duel could be considered as a crime, inasmuch as it is an *intention commune—réciprocité et simultanéité d’attaque et de défense*.* His having studied at two German universities, where, to say the least, duelling was not severely punished, was also in his favour; and that

* Essai historique et critique sur le duel, d’après notre législation et nos mœurs. Par Brillat et Savarin. Paris, 1819. Projet de législation sur les duels. Par M. Ricard d’Aallauch. Paris, 1819.

his short residence of but two months here admitted the possibility of his counsel pleading an *ignorantia juris*, that may enable him to escape with eight or ten years' imprisonment."

"And that you call an escape!" exclaimed Julie de Lindesmar.

M. de Bellegarde shrugged his shoulders. "The less we say about it the better, Julie—it is an unfortunate discreditable affair altogether; and though it may be named manslaughter, I never heard of a more decided case of gentleman-like murder."

The last days of summer had passed, and the brown and yellow leaves of autumn began to cover the walks and avenues. Day after day Cyrilla visited her village, although Melanie, who occasionally accompanied her, endeavoured to persuade her to be more careful of her health, and avoid the fogs on the river. "I have so much to do, and so little time," she constantly answered; and her sister imagined she feared the approaching winter might commence before the houses of the colonists would be habitable. Cyrilla did not explain, but her constant companions, the Vicar and Conrad, knew well that the idea of death had taken complete possession of her mind; and that her only desire now was to benefit her fellow-creatures in some way before the close of her short career. She wondered how little meaning the word death had had for her heretofore—how undefined her thoughts—how distant and indistinct the prospect had been. Now

ever present to her mind—the aspect of all around her changed—she prepared with calm resignation to leave a world of trial and sorrow, with hopes so great of future happiness, that nothing but the natural dread of the last struggle restrained her impatience to be free.

Her long conversations with the Vicar, generally commencing with some reminiscence of Rupert's youth on his part, but ever ending in a discussion of the most momentous theological questions, were not unfrequently interrupted by Melanie, whose visionary flights at first interested but latterly began to shock her former friend Englmann. He found her mind a chaos of thought and fancies—a strange mixture of erudition and superstition—not refusing any creed, but rather willing to embrace a little of all ; and so oddly credulous on some points, so hard of conviction on others, that he scarcely thought it would be possible to restore true faith and peace of mind to such a wandering intellect and wavering imagination.

The President, uneasy and anxious about his nephew, no longer absorbed in book or newspaper, often overheard parts of these conversations ; and one evening, when, after an excursive flight to the different planets in our system, in which it became evident that Schlegel's idea of a nearer approach to the sun being a nearer approach to felicity had found favour in her mind, she had returned to earth, and had glided from the Mosaic account of creation

to the geological demand of millions of years for the same purpose, she was startled by hearing his voice close to her ear, whispering—

“Melanie, you have tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge—left the garden of Eden for ever, and mental thorns and thistles will henceforth be your portion.”

She was about to answer, when a servant entered the room and gave the President a letter that had been sent express from Exfort; his eye glanced rapidly over the first few lines, and then he walked hastily into another room.

Time was when such an occurrence would not have interrupted the most trivial conversation at Freilands; but the inhabitants, now living in daily dread of an accession to their grief, observed every trifle; and the circumstance of the President's having left the room with his letter was whisperingly pronounced a bad prognostic. After waiting some time in vain expectation of his return, they began to think that some one ought to follow him, and ask if the letter concerned Zorndorff. Melanie and Cyrilla looked at each other inquiringly, and then walked together to the doorway of the room he had entered. They saw him sitting in the chair nearest them in an attitude of the most complete despondency, a letter of considerable length spread out before him, on which his eyes were fixed, though he did not appear to be reading.

It was a copy of Zorndorff's letter to the Inqui-

sitor that had been transmitted to him ; and so overwhelming had been the destruction of all his hopes, and the confirmation of his worst fears, that even when Melanie stood beside him he found it at first impossible to speak, and handed her the letter in silence.

Either from knowing that Cyrilla's eyes were fixed upon her as well as her husband's, or perhaps better acquainted with Zorndorff's character than the latter supposed, she appeared less surprised and shocked than he expected.

" You do not perceive the baseness of his conduct," he observed, in a low deep voice.

" I do," she answered, slowly ; " and guessed his motives from the first."

" Motives," he repeated, bitterly ; " there are motives, and even strong ones, for most crimes ; but his is a complication of all that is base and dishonourable ; and not the most violent passion that ever existed can for a moment palliate such conduct. Melanie," he added, solemnly, " let the name of this cold-blooded deliberate murderer never again be mentioned in my presence."

Terrible as the President looked at that moment, Cyrilla had courage to extend her hand and take the letter from him. Melanie attempted to interfere.

" You must not let her see it, Wilhelm ; it will agitate her unnecessarily, and she has no strength to bear an addition to a grief that has already

nearly been fatal to her.....Cyrilla, dearest.....do not read the confession of a man who was evidently in a state of distraction when he wrote."

But the letter was already in Cyrilla's hand, and they now both anxiously watched her countenance while she read the avowal that love for her had been the incentive to the ruthless deed that had plunged them and so many families into affliction. She did not weep when reading, or utter one word when she returned it to the President; but he had scarcely left the room before she sat down, and leaning back, apparently more dead than alive, murmured: "O, Melanie, my last hope is extinct—my worst fears confirmed—I am guilty of.....Rupert's death!"

"You!" cried Melanie, pretending to misunderstand her. "Dear Cyrilla, do not indulge such an idea for a moment. How could you prevent Edouard from loving you?"

"Melanie.....if it had not been for that day at Spa.....he would have had no pretence for marring my happiness—no power to work such desolation among us!"

"Rather let us deplore Wilhelm's severity," said Melanie, who, as the promoter of that unfortunate scheme, felt it necessary for her own relief to throw the blame elsewhere. "Had we dared speak to him, one word would have removed our difficulties and all impediments to.....to....."

Cyrilla made a sign to her sister to stop, buried her face in her hands for a few moments, and then,

rising, drew her towards the door, saying, "Come with me to my room; I do not wish to be alone just now."

Melanie followed her down the broad, brilliantly lighted staircase, to the lofty, lonely hall, with its pillars and marble tables; and there Cyrilla stopped, and, looking round her, said, "Let me once more recall those last ten days of happiness, which I scarcely dared to enjoy, so great was my fear of the machinations of that unscrupulous, cruel man! Every room in this house, every spot in the domain, brings Rupert before me, bright-looking and joyous, as he ever was! Does it not appear but as yesterday that he was with us here.....in this very hall, healthy and happy.....oh, so happy! You remember the last night.....the Bellegardes were with us.....we walked home with them.....and afterwards with Rupert, to the lake.....There was moonlight then—bright moonlight.....and now, too, I believe; but it is shining on the grave containing his mangled remains!"

"O Cyrilla, remember what the Vicar said about the sin of encouraging grief, or yielding to it inordinately."

"And have I done so?" she rejoined, reproachfully, as they entered her room. "Have I not made every exertion that could be required of me? That letter, Melanie—that terrible confession which we have just read—has broken my heart. For me there is now no peace but in the grave; and God

will mercifully take me from a world in which I have caused and suffered so much evil."

She seated herself beside her sister, and, taking Rupert's last letter from a drawer in her writing-table, continued: "I have lately often thought of the night when I imagined I saw him in my room, and....."

"Yes, dear; but don't talk of that now," said Melanie, with a look of terror, glancing towards the windows, where the curtains, however, were drawn with the care befitting autumn, and no stray gleam of moonlight reached the adjacent chairs. "I have frequently wished to speak to you about it.....but the morning is the best time.....Let us talk of it to-morrow. You will go to rest now.....won't you.....and not walk about your room all night, as I have heard that you so constantly do?"

"I dream so painfully that I dread sleep," replied Cyrilla, in a melancholy voice. "Night after night I fancy myself standing with you on the balcony at Exfort, and see that frightful procession pass beneath the windows.....much.....much nearer than it was in reality. I hear the tramp of feet; I see the upturned, gravely wondering faces of the crowd; and then the bier, with its long, motionless figure. Last night, the covering cloak was slowly thrown aside. Rupert stood up, and, stretching his arms towards the balcony, made a sign to me to spring down to him....."

"But you did not—O, I hope you did not!" cried Melanie, eagerly.

"It was but a dream," answered Cyrilla, smiling faintly. "Yet, even in dream, I shuddered, and for a moment hesitated; but when he again beckoned, I threw myself forward, saw him rise to meet me, and a moment afterwards we were floating together in the air, far beyond the town of Exfort."

"And then you awoke?"

"Not until I had seen a hearse, followed by a procession of carriages, pass out of the east gate of the town. Rupert pointed to it, and said, 'They are taking us to the vault at Windhorst, Cyrilla, and mourning for us as the youthful alone are ever mourned.'"

"And then!" asked Melanie, perceiving that she paused.

"It was a morning dream," answered Cyrilla; "and the sound of the lighting of my stove wakened me."

"I wish," said Melanie, a little anxiously—"I wish you would allow Ursula to sleep in your room to-night."

"I intend to do so, because her presence will force me to control my feelings," replied Cyrilla; "but you must not ring.....I do not want her for an hour at least."

For many succeeding days Cyrilla was too ill to leave her room, and when somewhat recovered, it was found necessary to turn the breakfast into a

drawing room, as she was too weak to mount the staircase. Conrad wandered about, grave and thoughtful; sometimes diffidently proposing to row her to the village, or drive her there in the pony-carriage; at others, bringing quantities of flowers from the greenhouse—the arrangement of which seemed to afford her a pleasure quite incomprehensible to him.

One morning, as he entered the room, with both hands full, he perceived that she was drawing. Delighted to see her, as he thought, renewing her former occupations, he strode towards the table; but his countenance fell, and the flowers dropped from his hand, when he discovered that she had just finished the slightly coloured sketch of a simple tombstone, on which Rupert's name was already written, followed by her own, with a space left for the insertion of the date. His exclamation, and sudden rush out of the room, induced the President to rise and walk behind Cyrilla's chair. She leaned back, and, holding the drawing towards him, said, "You will have something resembling this placed over or near the vault at Windhorst; and as we are alone, let me take the opportunity of telling you, that I wish to make a will in favour of Fernanda. You will undertake the necessary arrangements for me, I am sure."

"Certainly," answered the President, gravely. "Many people have made wills, and lived to alter them a score of years afterwards."

Cyrilla, taking no notice of this remark, continued: "Melanie has of course told you, that I have written to ask Fernanda to come here. How soon do you think we may expect her?"

"In about a week or ten days," he answered.

"By that time," she said, half inquiringly, "we shall know the result of this unhappy trial."

"Perhaps so.....The verdict, in the first instance, was so severe, that an appeal has been made to a higher tribunal. *One* indeed refused to do so, and wished for death; but I directed his counsel to take the necessary steps without consulting him."

"You are right—quite right," said Cyrilla, in a voice so low, that Melanie, who just then entered the room, could not hear it; but she saw.....that the President, kneeling beside her sister, picked up one by one the flowers scattered on the carpet by Conrad; and as he placed them beside the dying girl, large tears, that had for some time clouded his clear gray eyes, fell slowly upon them.

Cyrilla did not perceive this. She began to arrange the flowers in a glass of water, while saying, gently, "Thank you, dear Wilhelm—you are very kind."

CONCLUSION.

ZORNDORFF, after having completed his unreserved self-accusation, declined making further disclosures, and awaited in proud taciturnity the verdict he knew would be pronounced by his judges. Having refused to appeal to a higher court, and not knowing that his counsel had done so for him, he was scarcely prepared for the clemency of the following sentence, as far as he himself was concerned.

Edouard, Count Zorndorff, twenty years—Victor, Count Lindesmar, eight years—and Lieutenant von Klemmhein, three years' imprisonment—the last-named, *salva fama*—in the fortress of W——. Captain Stauffen, honourably acquitted, has permission to return to the duties of his regiment.

Zorndorff calmly observed that he had deserved death, and wished, by suffering the penalty, he could release from punishment those who had been altogether drawn into error by him.

Cyrilla did not long survive the publication of

this verdict. Although the arrival of Fernanda served to rouse her from her languor, and even gave her strength sufficient for several long conversations with her sister, she soon again began to sink beneath the attacks of the lingering fever, which no remedies of the attending physicians could remove, and breathed her last surrounded by mourning friends, who eagerly listened to and long remembered her murmured words of faith, and hopes of joyful reunion with those she loved, in another and a better world.

By one of the strange chances so common in life, the day on which Zorndorff and Lindesmar left Exfort for their place of destination, they overtook the long train of carriages that accompanied to the first village on the road to Windhorst the hearse containing the remains of Rupert and Cyrilla. Step by step the well-guarded carriage followed in the funeral procession, while in it the most hopelessly and deeply mourning mourners of all bent down their heads in silent agony. When at last a halt was made, and they were permitted to pass, one furtive glance showed them the pall that covered the coffins of both their victims.

FINIS.





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